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Speed is so last year

John Milbank



There was a time when every road test required every bike, whatever it was, to be taken to Bruntingthorpe proving ground in Leicestershire and thrashed for a top-speed figure. It seemed to matter whether a machine could scrape an extra two mile per hour above twice the legal limit. To be perfectly honest, I really couldn't care less any more.

Don't get me wrong – I'm not going to start preaching about speed limits. I believe 30s, 40s, 50s etc. should be kept to without fail, but there's a difference between making progress on an open stretch of national speed limit road, and cracking 150mph plus just because you can.

I also don't mean to suggest that there's no longer a place for fast motorcycles. Of course there is, and there's a time and a place for them to stretch their legs. It's just that – more than anything else – I find myself really enjoying smooth, fast, twisty roads now. For those you don't need a bike with triple-figure power or speed, you just need something that handles well.

A journalist mate recently posted a pic of the Suzuki SV650 he'd just taken for a ride... it got a few of us discussing how we all seem to hit a point where we say "Actually, that's all I need". It's become a motorcycle media cliché.

I was at a café the other day, listening to a biker bemoan a set of average speed cameras on a long, straight and quiet rural road. "It's just a cash cow," he said. "You won't hurt anyone." I pointed out that I know

of several deaths on that road, but more than that, I tried to argue that if you only get your thrills from going flat-out in a straight line, it might be worth getting some advanced training, to see how much fun biking can really be.

In this issue you'll read about my ride on the Causeway Coastal Road in Northern Ireland – it's what proved to me that I don't need all the power I once thought I did. I still appreciate machines like the R1 and H2, and rest assured – I'm well aware that I'm privileged to be able to test them, which I'll continue to do with a totally open mind. But as to what I want to own for myself? I can't afford every bike I enjoy, so I have to go for what really works best for me the majority of the time.

It's ironic then that I got home from Ireland to an envelope containing a Notice of Intended Prosecution. I'd been caught doing 47mph in a 40 limit on the little 650 Versys. It was a route I knew only too well – the work commute. I should have remembered the camera, but more to the point, I shouldn't have been speeding in this built-up area. I'd seen a break in traffic and I knew that if I missed it I would be stuck in the middle of the road, waiting for the long stream behind a tractor, so I dived for the gap. Stupid.

The speed awareness course will cost me £93.50 – I'll tell you what it was like next month. Maybe if I'd been on a more powerful machine, I wouldn't have been so complacent. Damn all these great bikes...

John Milbank,
Editor



Bruce's view

Choosing the machines for this issue's naked group test wasn't easy, but it was fun, and I hope you enjoy reading about them. According to the Motorcycle Industry Association, almost a third of bikes sold in the UK are now bare. That's up 3% from last year and 7% on the stats from 2009, pre-recession. With more new models confirmed for 2016, it's looking very exciting for the naked scene.

Bruce Wilson,
Deputy editor

Motorcycle Sport & Leisure's contributors...



Alan Cathcart

Alan Cathcart has been writing about bikes for more than 30 years, and riding them for even longer. He's regularly given the keys to factory prototypes and being on first name terms with the bosses of bike companies around the world allows him to bag many scoops.



Roland Brown

Has ridden for 37 years and been a bike journalist for more than 30. At *Bike* he ended up as deputy editor before going freelance. An author of 11 books, as a racer he was Bemsee 1300 champion 1984 and raced UK F1, Superstock and Superbike, plus World F1 races.



Chris Moss

Mossy has raced the Isle of Man TT, dispatched in London and ridden everything from CX500s to full-blown GP prototypes. A former chief motorcycle tester for *Motorcycle News*, the 53-year-old admits he's still loving two-wheeled life, and still learning.



Peter Henshaw

Peter knows his stuff – he's a former editor of this very magazine. Now a freelance journalist, he's got the same enthusiasm for anything with wheels that he's had since a child. An all-year-round biker who doesn't own a car, he has more than 40 books to his name.



Leon Mannings

Dr Mannings has just completed his 100th column for *Motorcycle Sport & Leisure*. Impressive, especially considering he's also a member of the London Roads Task Force at Transport for London, a policy advisor at MAG, and a consultant to the MCIA.

MSL November

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BREATHTAKING SCOTLAND

WORDS: Bruce Wilson



One to Ride:

Route: Glenshee to Spey Bridge

Distance: 63 miles

Time: 2 hours

Nothing can prepare you for the sheer beauty of the Spittal of Glenshee, situated on the south side of the Cairngorms National Park. Rugged, raw and quite simply breath-taking, it's hard to keep your eyes on the winding road ahead as you take in the dramatic landscape that surrounds you.

Waterfalls, lakes and rock faces welcome you into this must-ride arena of natural phenomena, which is often compared to the terrain found in Norway. Having ascended along the narrow A93, the road eventually plateaus as you reach the Glenshee Ski Centre, where you can grab a cup of coffee and admire the surrounding summits, of which

the tallest towers an impressive 3500ft above sea level.

The road never loses its twisting nature, but the undulations become less intense as you come into contact with the River Dee, which winds alongside you all the way up until reaching Balmoral Castle; open to the public when the royal family isn't in attendance. It's well worth a visit, featuring stunning gardens within its rich forested boundaries, not to mention an insightful royal residence to explore.

At Balmoral you branch off on the extremely narrow B976, edging away from dense woodland in favour of moorland and vast open spaces. There are trails everywhere, of which a number can be travelled by motorcycle – assuming you have the inclination – but just sticking to the road is exciting enough.



The descent back down the other side of the Cairngorms, riding along the A939, kicks in after reaching Cock Bridge, delivering stunning scenes from

all angles of the mountainous terrain, right the way up until reaching Spey Bridge, where you arrive back in civilisation and pick up the A95.



SCREW IT. LET'S RIDE.

Monster Monster

A new member of the family brings outright performance and a track focus...

Ducati has released details of the most powerful Monster ever – the 1200R.

While rumours circulated of a naked Panigale, this appears to be as close as the Italians want to get – it's still described as being designed "for those who make sports performance their lifestyle and wish to turn each ride into an adrenaline-packed experience without forgoing the essential, practical appeal of a naked model".

The launch is being held on track in Malaga, so there's no doubting Ducati's ambitions with the R – indeed, the bike sits 15mm higher than the 1200S, which combined with the redesigned and raised exhaust system, along with new footpegs offer increased ground clearance and a 2kg lighter weight.

Other changes to the chassis include a shorter, thinner single-piece rider and pillion seat, a fatter section (200, up from 190) rear tyre on lighter three-spoke Panigale-inspired forged wheels, and separate rider and pillion footpegs (they were previously carried on the same hanger).

The 1198cc Testastretta 11° Dual Spark engine has been revised to make a massive 160bhp @ 8250rpm – up from 145bhp @ 8750rpm on the 1200S and 135bhp on the 1200 (reviewed in this month's road test). Torque is up too – the S makes 91.8lb-ft @ 7250rpm, with the standard bike making 87lb-ft; the new R pushes out 97lb-ft @ 7750rpm, while toeing the Euro 4 emissions line.

The increased performance is partly thanks to a larger diameter – by 8mm – for the 2-1-2 exhaust system and a new, oval section throttle body.



The new Monster 1200R is also available in black.

Compression has also been raised from 12.5:1 to 13:1. While Ducati claims that the 90° V-twin (or L-twin) offers a "thrilling experience" on track, back on the road 75% of the engine's torque is said to be available at just 3500rpm.

The Monster's signature trellis frame is retained, bolted directly to the cylinder heads, as on the Panigale. The sub-frame is also fitted directly to the engine, with the 1200R carried by new, fully-adjustable 48mm titanium nitride-coated Öhlins

forks, and a fully-adjustable Öhlins rear shock.

The same 330mm discs bitten by Brembo monobloc calipers as the 1200S (10mm larger than the standard model) are fitted – lifted from the 1299 Panigale supersport model. Ducati's Safety Pack is standard, with three-level ABS and traction control.

We'll have the full test ride of the new Monster – along with the very best industry insight – in the next issue of *Motorcycle Sport & Leisure* magazine.



Side Cases

New SH36 side cases, with capacity for a modular helmet XXL and the innovative 3P System fitting kit



reddot design award
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Comfort Seats - Heated

Designed to ensure comfort, thanks to '3D Mesh' technology which absorbs and reduces vibration. New models also available in heated version



Semi-rigid

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Concerns over MoT changes



Chancellor George Osborne's plan to extend the deadlines for new bikes and cars to be MoT tested after four years instead of three has faced criticism from industry experts.

The change, which it is claimed could save motorists "more than £100 million per year", would see cars travelling an average of around 8000 miles more before facing any form of compulsory inspection.

Bridgestone's north region managing director Robin Shaw is urging a rethink. He said: "Our roads would be more dangerous than ever if changes are made."

While motorcyclists would – we hope – be quite capable of recognising excessive wear on their tyres, Shaw believes the added 12 months will result in more cars running on illegal tyres below the 1.6mm tread depth limit, increasing the risks to all road users.

When Highways England checked more than 100,000 tyres in England, Scotland and Wales, 27% were below the 1.6mm limit, with 39% between 1.6mm and 2mm.

Figures from the Department for Transport, as presented by TyreSafe in July, state that tyres were the number one contributing factor to killed or seriously injured (KSI) cases in the UK between 2009 and 2013 (36%) in terms of vehicle defects – more so than braking and steering faults (31% and 16% respectively).

According to the Department for Transport, 981 people were either killed or seriously injured as a result of dangerous tyres, and Bridgestone believes that a law to lengthen the first MoT test to four years will only add to

the figures, particularly when the average life of a car tyre is said to be around three years.

Shaw also pointed out that the cost of tyre-related road casualties in the same period stood at £435,593,773, (according to more figures from the DFT) and argued that the figure would only rise due to tyres coming to the end of their life – and motorists not checking them.

"The tyre industry spends a great deal of time attempting to educate motorists about checking their tyres regularly, but we know that one in five drivers have never checked their tyre tread depth," he said.

"When coupling this with the fact that a car tyre often needs replacing within four years due to wear and illegal tread depth, you can see that this proposal could have disastrous consequences, with our roads becoming more dangerous than ever.

"We firmly believe that the change in law would negatively impact upon the number of road deaths and casualties."



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As we went to press, Kawasaki announced that it was preparing to unveil the new ZX-10R. An exclusive media launch will be hosted alongside the Kawasaki Racing Team in Barcelona during October, for what Kawasaki Heavy Industries project leader Yoshimoto Matsuda describes as "not a clean sheet design" thanks to the current Ninja ZX-10R being "such a good base to develop from".

"With the new model," he said, "we have focused our development resources on an overall engineering and performance

improvement. We are proud of the result; it means a significant advance in terms of both chassis and engine performance as well as providing the platform to introduce new, state of the art rider aids and other technology."

It is promised to be equally at home on the race track or as a "highly responsive daily riding machine" and you can find out the latest news as it happens by joining us on our Facebook page. Just click 'like'. We'll also be offering gifts and prizes as more of you join us, so get involved and say hello today at www.facebook.com/MSLmag



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See you at the Stoneleigh show

The International Dirt Bike Show at Stoneleigh Park in Warwickshire is open from October 29 to November 1, with a huge amount of motorbike-related things to do and see. There's low cost admission and free entry for those aged 10 and under, so a visit to the show could be a great opportunity for a family day out during the October school half-term.

The line-up of manufacturers is incredibly diverse this year, with the giants of the scene all at Stoneleigh Park. You can also expect to find extensive displays of clothing, parts, accessories, gadgets, tyres, lubricants... plus you have the race trucks and trailers and all the main associations ready to share information on the hundreds of year-round events that take place in the UK.

On-stage entertainment will be hosted by World and British Superbike commentator Jack Burnicle. There'll be live action



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with Arena Trials, Minibike Supercross and the have-a-go Electric Zone. Younger members of the family are catered for with My First Honda Licence, Strider Bikes and Kids Quads. The amazing Wall of Death will be on site too.

It's far from being just about the dirt – if you're into bikes, you'll love the show. There are also great savings to be made by

buying tickets before you go; Adult admission is £8 in advance for the opening day, Thursday, October 29, or £13 for Friday through to Sunday.

With so much going on all at the one venue, it's easy to see why for thousands of dirt biking fans, this show is a must-do trip not to be missed!

For more information visit www.dirtbikeshow.co.uk



Z1000SX gets upgraded

Kawasaki's best-selling sports tourer – the Z1000SX – has been upgraded for 2016 with ABS as standard, along with an assist slipper clutch and new colour options.

The clutch – made by Japanese company FCC – is said to give a 30% lighter feel at the lever, as well as helping to prevent the rear wheel from locking under more spirited down changes.

The Versys 1000 has also gained new colour options, including Candy Lime Green.

For more details, visit www.kawasaki.co.uk



Guy Martin ruled out

► Racer Guy Martin will NOT be among the presenters on the new-look BBC Top Gear TV show, according to a local newspaper.

Previous presenters Jeremy Clarkson, James May and Richard Hammond have moved to Amazon's online streaming service, leaving Radio DJ Chris Evans to take over. Despite being linked to the role, Evans has said that Guy joins Philip Glenister and Patrick Kielty as those wrongly rumoured to be co-hosts of the show, the Scunthorpe Telegraph reports.

The news comes after Guy's 130mph crash at the Ulster GP, which left him with five broken vertebrae, a cracked sternum, five broken ribs and two broken metacarpals. This serious incident – which didn't prevent him from returning to work as a truck mechanic the next week – also put a stop to his Land Speed Record attempt with Triumph, which is being rescheduled for 2016. For more on Guy and other breaking stories, visit MoreBikes.co.uk

Bike insurer in administration

► Bikers Legal Defence Ltd (known as BLD) has entered administration. The company – also known as Altamura Concepts, Ministry of Bikes, The MoB, FI International and Salvage Solutions – provides insurance and claims handling, plus MoTs and repairs.

A small number of staff have been kept on to handle calls to the company, which has branches in Cumbernauld, Birmingham and Camberley.

If your insurance was arranged through BLD, visit www.bldgroup.co.uk

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Spidi's new Voyager

The Spidi Voyager 3 Jacket, priced at £279.99, is said to be fully waterproof and good for use all year round thanks to its dynamic air intakes on the shoulders, sleeves and back.

Six storage pockets – including two waterproof and one large one on the back – make the jacket ideal for commuting or adventure bike riding. It includes CE armour in the shoulders and elbows, with space for CE chest thorax protectors.

The Voyager 3 uses high quality YKK zips and Fiochi buttons, and incorporates a mesh lining and stretch areas on the shoulder blades.

For more details, visit www.feridax.com or call 01384 413841.



Mini quick-fitting luggage

Givi has released the new XS319 – a super-compact tank bag and quick-release fitting system.

Priced at £48.71, with the bike-specific 'Tanklock' attachment flange typically costing around £14, the bag is designed for naked and sports bikes, giving a useful three litres of storage.

Made of 600D nylon, it includes reflective inserts, a fluorescent yellow rain cover, and shoulder strap. The mounting system eliminates the need for magnets and straps, and keep the base of the bag away from your tank's paint.

For more information, visit www.givi.co.uk or call 01327 706220.



Con artists increasingly targeting bike buyers

Experts have warned of a sharp rise in scams targeting used car and bike buyers and sellers. Telltale signs that con men might be involved include: vehicles advertised for considerably less than they are worth; mention of the vehicle being shipped to or from another country; all communication conducted via email, often in broken English.

"We are constantly hearing about scams in the used vehicle market," said Justin Powell, manager of My Car Check's Glasgow call-centre. "But the frequency of these calls has increased markedly in recent weeks. They are nearly always private sales because the crooks prey on people's unfamiliarity with the process. We urge both buyers and sellers to be extra vigilant. The volume and complexity of these scams suggests the involvement of organised criminal gangs."

"For buyers, a history checks at www.mycarcheck.com can prevent an expensive mistake, but all too often people contact us after the event, because they fear something is wrong. One such customer recently transferred £11,000 on the promise of a car being shipped from Germany. It was a classic escrow scam."

"Used vehicle sellers also need to keep their wits about them. The email below, targeting the seller of a Triumph motorbike, is typical of the wording we see time and again. In this case, a fake or fraudulent

PayPal account is 'the convincer'. If the seller had gone ahead, his bike would have been collected and shortly afterwards it would have emerged that payment hadn't been made. The bike would then have been sold to another unsuspecting victim...

"Thanks for your response. I'm quite satisfied with the condition and price, and I need you to understand that i am willing and ready to purchase it right away, end the advert, consider me as your favorite buyer just to close the deal and not selling to other buyer. However, I will not be able to come for inspection, all i need is your word of sincerity that it is in good condition as described online."

"If possible can you send me some more recent picture... I will be paying the PayPal charges (3.4%) from my account and will be paying directly into your PayPal account without any delay, and I hope you have a paypal account."

"If you have one already, just send me the address to send it to, which is the email address you use for it or you can send me a paypal money request, so once i receive the details i will go ahead with the payment through PayPal and then I will contact my shipping company after you get the payment. I will need your home address for it to be Picked Up by the Shipping Company."

First stand-alone air bag jacket

Dainese has revealed the D-air Misano 1000 leather jacket, which features a stand-alone, electronically-deployed air-bag for road use.

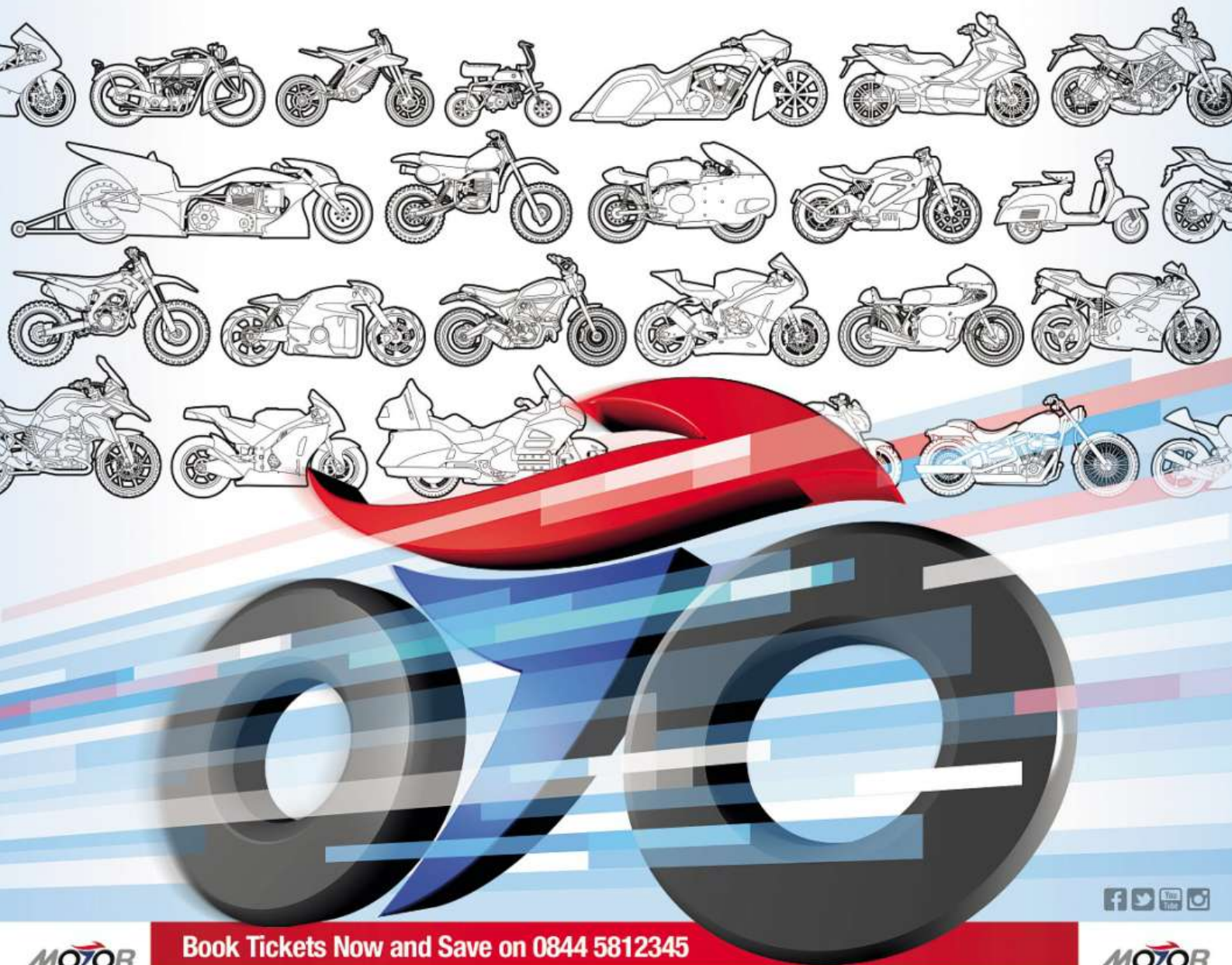
The new jacket operates without the need for any kit to be fitted to the motorcycle; the sensors, electronics and the GPS are all housed in the Misano's back protector.

The patented 3D airbag has an inner micro-filament structure that's said to provide uniform inflation of 5cm over all surfaces to provide maximum protection and comfort.

The triggering algorithm utilises six sensors to monitor the dynamics of the rider's body 800 times a second, and determines when to deploy the system in the event of impacts, high-sides and low-slides with tumbling.

The jacket will be available in two colour schemes from November, at a price of €1499.





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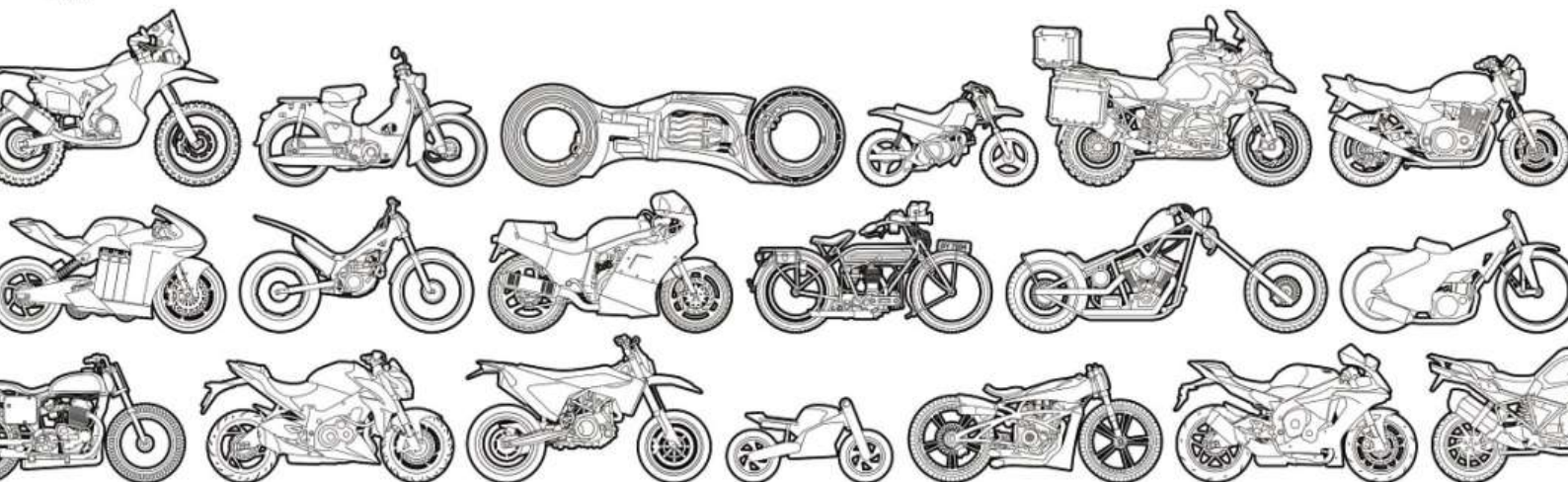
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WHERE MODERN MOTORCYCLING COMES ALIVE

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*Closing date for advanced tickets 5.00pm 27/11/2015. Manufacturers listed represent a selection of those available at the Show. All information correct at time of publication.



Why I ride

I suppose I fall into the category of older biker who is still looking for that initial thrill of riding. That's the weird thing with motorcycles; why do we ride them? For the thrill, yes that's one point. Ease of use; definitely – try slipping a car through a traffic jam. Feeling the 'bugs in the teeth'? Not really – I've got the scars from a wasp hitting my cheek.

The answer to the question is unfathomable. When I was a boy scout at 12 I carried a 7in sheath knife around with me; no one thought it dangerous. We camped in some isolated destinations, trapped rabbits for lunch, and chopped trees down with a felling axe. Dangerous in the eyes of some, but I like to think that we, even at that tender age, had a grain of common sense.

My age now is such that I really should know better, but damn it, why it should I? The impression I get from my peers is, "Are you still riding that thing, it's a bit dangerous at your age, don't you think?" Oh yes I do think, and that's the pull of why I still ride – as of now an old-tech 2003 Fazer 600. Before this I can count around 27 road and touring bikes.

My wife and I did serious touring when we reached middle age, and were exploring the continent for the next 10 years until arthritis made long trips uncomfortable. We would never have made the journeys, never tried marinated horsemeat or met

the memorable people along the way without the bike.

Our motorcycles did not have much in the way of electronics to bother us – only one BMW had ABS – neither did we use a sat-nav; I took Baden-Powell's advice and read my maps. We got lost on the odd occasion, but I reckoned that if we had plenty of fuel in the tank then we were not lost; a sort of Zen Buddhism attitude – if the motor was still running then we were making progress.

Looking back I suppose I was a bit selfish to my family – I spent an inordinate amount of money on my pleasure. But I did that because I like the idea of travelling alone... an explorer if you will. Even now on our congested main roads one can always turn left or right and find those underused by-ways that lead to an interesting old manor house, a great pub, or a great meal. Or an unexpected view that startles you into realising that there is more to any country than towns and cities that choke all thought, and cramp the wanderlust in us.

Bikes are really cool; I wonder who first said that?

Bob Marshall, Scarborough

Whoever said it first Bob, it needs saying over and over again to anybody who hasn't yet realised. Thanks for getting in touch!

Fit for purpose

Thanks Michael Harwood for making several points in the letters page of the last issue that I totally agree with – and I'm sorry you felt patronised by the phrase 'oop north' as that was not intended at all. Far from viewing anything outside London – aka 'darn sarf' – with condescension or contempt, I actually have huge respect for the great work and progress being made by MAG's rising number of activists, across the north of England, up to Scotland, out to Wales and into the Midlands.

Your desire to see more cooperation than bickering among bikers is something I share, along with your interest in ending bans on motorcycles in bus lanes. But progress like that is a more complex and time-consuming process than any of us like. And although such bans have not been lifted

in Leeds yet, the tide has turned behind the scenes at a far more influential level than officers in just one city in the West Yorkshire Combined Authority.

I can't say more about that right now as it is still a work in progress, but real progress will be delivered. I also agree with your key point that politicians should be more focused on making our roads fit for purpose than vanity projects or brand new train sets. But that won't happen until enough of us get them to do so.

Like all at MSL I'm really grateful that you made the effort to share your views about issues that may not be 'very sexy' as you rightly say – but interest and action about such things is crucial for the future of motorcycling everywhere in the UK. Thanks again...

Leon Mannings

The golden age is now

I had a discussion today with a fellow – more mature – rider. He said that the so-called 'golden age' of motorcycling was in the 60s, with all the Goldies and Bonnies et al.

But I say no, he's wrong, and this is why. Yes in the 60s those bikes probably were great, and objectively ridden they probably still are. But they leak oil, are slow, don't handle too well, are mechanically fairly fragile, and are a pain/expensive to maintain. Plus designs were a bit limited – if you wanted a naked sit up and beg, or naked with dropped bars then fine. Otherwise, you were stuffed. The motorcycle has evolved, and the bikes of the 60s can't hold a candle to what we have now. To quote Bob Dylan, the times they are a changing.

The golden age of motorcycling is now. Here. Never before have we had such a variety of machinery from such a variety of manufacturers at such a variety of prices. Urban commuters with heated seats, continent-crossing tourers, desert-conquering adventure bikes, tarmac-shredding superbikes (some with superchargers), the most custom of

cruisers and even 60s throwbacks – it's all here.

Bikes now need next to no maintenance, never break down, bits don't fall off them mid-ride and (largely) they handle really well. Plus for the first time I can remember in recent years, I'm seeing young lads on tiddlers bombing around our streets, often in groups.

With the resurgence in sales figures I'm pretty sure we can take off those rose-tinted glasses and put back our clear ones to fully appreciate what we have now.

In 2045 we can argue with our kids, and relate biking stories to our grand kids about 'The Golden Age of Motorcycles' back in 2015.

Graham Mudd

Motorcycle magazine offices have long rung with the cliché 'we've never had it so good'. We're past that malarkey, but there really are some great choices out there now. Motorcycling's future is looking positive. With the MT-07, Versys 650, Street 750 and many more showing the way for value, there's never been a better time to buy. We've never had it so good...

A new Dawn for Honda

I have just received my first copy of *MSL* after three years without it – the six month subscription offer was just too good to ignore.

So much of what Honda's Nick Campolucci says in Bruce's excellent interview rings true, and I wish Honda well with the Africa Twin; having seen the carefully constructed teaser videos and read the spec, I went straight to my local Honda dealer to see when it will be arriving for a test ride. The general blandness of many of Honda's current bikes in the showroom reminded me of why I haven't owned a Honda for years, and I think it is excellent that Mr Campolucci admits the recent mistakes (VFR 1200, first Crossrunner etc).

But the Africa Twin is a really exciting proposition; not least for me, because its architecture is so similar to Yamaha's original XTZ750 Super Tenere (parallel twin with balance shafts) which was one of the most fun bikes I have ever owned: torquey, smooth, slim, versatile and not too complicated (forget the Dual Clutch Transmission: my friendly dealer sent me out on a boring NC750X to try the alien DCT thing; having to make an emergency stop with no clutch or gear lever was terrifying, even though it worked!).

Let's hope the new Africa Twin marks a new dawn for Honda, like Yamaha's recent reawakening. Bikes have to be fun, even if we



Two of Richard's previous XTZ750s.

are now all old men; we might not be able to jump the Africa Twin like in Honda's videos, but we still need to dream. Oh, isn't that a Honda phrase?

Richard Taylor,
South West France

Thanks very much Richard, and yes – we're excited about the new Africa Twin too. We're expecting the launch to happen towards the end of this month, so you'll be able to find out a lot more about it very soon.

Recycle your old motorcycle kit

There are regular reviews in *MSL* for kit. Hopefully they advise and inspire you to make good choices when you buy new items. But what do you do with the gear you're replacing? Throw it away? Try to sell it on eBay? As long as

it's still serviceable, why not contact your local training school and see if they could make use of it?

Way too many people turn up without appropriate clothing. This can mean them being turned

away; if that happens, they might not come back, losing a potential lifelong biker from the fold. Your old kit might make sure they can go out, and get hooked.

Of course, you shouldn't give them your old helmet. But that doesn't mean it still can't be put to good use. Contact your local St John Ambulance; they need old helmets to teach trainees how to safely remove them following an accident.

So the next time you update your kit, see if the old stuff can be put to good use. You'll be helping your fellow bikers, and might just help save a life.

Bob Pickett

Cheers Bob – a good point well made. I once passed on several large boxes of old kit after my early years in bike mags to a very enthusiastic riding school near my home. It's great to think that we can help more riders discover the joys of biking.

If you've got some old kit, consider helping others with it.



Hello from Iraq

I'm working in Iraq, and picked up *MSL* with other mags to last me two months. I ride a 2003 R1. The correct and proper journalism in your mag makes it a pleasure to read – I've never subscribed to a mag previously, however after reading your September issue I will be. It's nice to read articles that inform and clearly show that your journalists want their readers to enjoy their riding, the bike and the whole experience.

Other mags just keep you guessing as to what some of their sentences are supposed to mean. They harp on about where they are testing bikes abroad, testing and sometimes trashing bikes that most of us mortals can only ever dream about, let alone have a chance to ride.

Your magazine was a breath of fresh air, and will be the one and only from now on.

Please pass on my regards to your journalists, and keep up the quality you're delivering.

Geraint Newell



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We love to hear from you; send your letters to msleditor@mortons.co.uk, or write to **Letters, Motorcycle Sport & leisure magazine, Mortons Media, Horncastle, Lincs LN9 6JR**. You can also join us at facebook.com/mslmag



Milestones, heroes and villains

Leon Mannings



The difference between 99 and 100 is only one, but reaching a ton can trigger all sorts of feelings and reactions. Rushes of adrenalin flow sometimes, but a smile and moment for reflection felt good to me as I started this, my hundredth column in

MSL. That didn't last long as I'm far more interested in what's happening now and could be next. Nevertheless, various things struck me that wouldn't have done if I hadn't paused as a small milestone flashed by.

First, I realised how lucky I am to spend so much of my time working alongside a wonderful range of unsung heroes. The vast majority of them are volunteers who strike a tough balance between working hard for a living – and equally hard to make life better for bikers and motorcycling in the UK. Most of the work they do to get biking treated better is behind closed doors in government offices, and about as far from the limelight as you can get. But thankfully for us, the activists in MAG that I'm privileged to work with are more interested in battling to make progress (which can take years) than receiving the high levels of praise that more typical types of hero get.

You can't be a hero of any sort though unless there are exceptional challenges and/or villains to face. On race tracks, the toughest challenges are easy to spot. Riding faster than anybody else and finishing first is usually the hardest thing to achieve. Doing that a lot, and with the most bravery and skill makes you a hero. But bike racers are far too nice to ever be real villains. Conversely, it's hard to imagine that there are no villains in the arenas where motorcycling related policy evolves. Motorised biking and the interests or safety of riders in the UK are so poorly treated in contrast to other 'vulnerable' road users, it seems reasonable for us to see the people who are responsible for such inequities as villains.

To be frank, and like many campaigners for fairer and more rational policies for motorcycling in the UK, I am often infuriated when motorcyclists' interests and concerns are ignored or dismissed as insignificant, at local or central government levels. I probably see as much red mist as thwarted racers do when they feel they've been unfairly shafted by another rider in the field. But having paused to ask myself who the real villains are, I've started to think that it's not a 'who' we should be looking for in the corridors of power, it's a 'what'.

The biggest blocker of progress in most situations I see is not evil-minded action by villainous policy

Battles to get biking treated better may seem part of an endless war with anti-biking baddies, but there could be a more powerful force we need to tackle...

wonks – or fanatically zealous campaigners for other modes of transport who often shout louder and get more attention. The most significant and influential villain of the piece is ignorance – about motorcycling – and what the vast majority of 'bikers' are really like. My recent engagements in developments across the UK made two things clearer than ever about the negative power of ignorance – and what can be done to get things moving in a positive direction.

Very few officers or elected members involved with roads policy development have any detailed knowledge about the many benefits of enabling more people to ride motorbikes or scooters. Meanwhile, many of them base their views of what motorcycling can offer and what 'bikers' are like on bad news stories in the mainstream media, or heavily biased anti-biking claims by lobbyists for other road user groups.

The good news about the 'ignorance' problem is that it has a range of effective solutions. Vital elements in developing those solutions are productive dialogues with policy shapers to increase their understanding and knowledge of the facts that need proper consideration. The process of replacing ignorance with knowledge and well-informed understanding is of course far easier to say than do, but it can and is being done. In various key areas of the UK, from Scotland to Wales, across the North of England, through the Midlands and on to the South Coast, motorcycling is being viewed in a fresh and clearer light. And there is one reason above all that this is happening in my view.

A small handful of unsung heroes around the UK are engaging with policy officers and elected members in a far more sophisticated way than old school campaigning that involved 'heroes' shouting at 'villains'. In my view this will deliver nationwide progress, albeit in the fullness of time rather than tomorrow. I look forward to seeing that happen and also hope that more bikers will consider stepping up to a plate that won't bring them a hero's glory – but it will make biking better in Blighty.

Who is Mannings?

Leon is *MSL*'s political man. Working within the corridors of power Dr Mannings is consistently on the inside picking up the big political changes and whispers that threaten to change the motorcycle world we all inhabit. Always on the side of the biker, Leon is a hard-edged, educated campaigner for two-wheeled rights and has been hugely influential where it really matters

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The 2016 CRF250R has a substantial top-end power boost from a new HRC-developed cylinder head, piston and con-rod, with stronger bottom-end torque and no loss of mid-range performance. And the Showa SFF-TAC-Air forks have been further improved to reduce friction and improve response and damping. The aluminium beam frame and mass centralisation programme give the bike lightning fast agility and sure-footed stability while Honda's programmable engine mapping system means riders can select one of three pre-set configurations to suit the prevailing conditions. If you're a serious MX2 competitor, this is the bike you need to ride.

SPECIFICATION:

- 249cc single cylinder engine
- Showa 49mm inverted air suspension SFF-TAC forks
- Aluminium twin tube frame
- 260mm hydraulic wave disc brake
- Engine Mode Select Button on handlebars
- Fuel Injected

ENGINE

Type: Liquid-cooled 4-stroke single cylinder uni-cam
Displacement: 249cc
Max. Power Output: 29.4kW @ 11,500rpm

FRAME

Type: Aluminium twin tube

CHASSIS

Seat Height: 951mm

Ground Clearance: 322mm

Kerb Weight: 105.6kg

SUSPENSION

Front:

Showa 49mm inverted SFF-TAC air fork (310mm stroke)

Rear:

Showa monoshock using Honda Pro-Link system (317.6mm stroke, 133mm axle travel)
Dunlop MX52 tyres.

Enter at the Classic Dirt Bike Magazine stand at the International Dirt Bike Show 2015, where the bike will be on display, or enter online at www.dirtbikeshow.co.uk. The winner will be the first name selected at random.

*Competition open to UK applicants only. Specific terms and conditions and general competition terms and conditions apply: visit www.dirtbikeshow.co.uk for full details. Closing date: Monday, 9th November, 2015.

Harley-Davidson Street 750

THE RETURN OF THE KING

Harley-Davidson is fighting its corner as the world's biggest custom bike builder with much more than a few cosmetic tweaks.

WORDS: John Milbank PHOTOGRAPHY: Harley-Davidson



The custom scene is changing. With Yamaha's Yard-Built project – and others – stealing focus from Harley-Davidson, some custom builders have been shifting their allegiance to bikes that didn't previously see customisation beyond a set of new indicators and a tank pad.

The Dark Custom range was launched in the US back in 2008, but Harley declared its rebirth during a two-day launch in Barcelona. Described as the “underground contemporary face of Harley-Davidson,” it's a very timely reminder that the American company has been the leader of custom bikes for 113 years. “It's in our DNA” is a phrase

used by many brands today, but it's impossible to deny Harley's heritage.

There are now over 10,000 parts and accessories in the H-D catalogue, with 89% of riders said to customise their machines in some way; “Don't think black,” we were told in the presentation, “think blank”. Dark Custom is a canvas for owners to create something that's truly theirs. Custom builders around the world have huge experience with the platform, though it's also possible for a customer to take their idea to an H-D dealership and ask the mechanics to build – or assist with – their dream bike.

Harley-Davidson is of course still very much growing – 83% of Sportster purchasers are new to the brand – but like the rest of the industry, it

understands that a younger audience is vital. In Europe, the Middle East and Asia (EMEA), 21% of all Iron 883 sales are to the 18-30 age group. The new (to the UK) Street 750 has the potential to grow that significantly; it's a budget-priced machine that retains much of the Harley look and feel, but really is crying out to be personalised.

Whether it's as simple as ‘sticker-bombing’ the tank, or modifying and replacing, repainting and refining, it seems unlikely that many of these machines will be rolling through cities with the same look as when they left the factory.

‘Reborn in Barcelona’ were several bikes from the H-D range, but we rode the three key ones – the Iron 883, Forty-Eight and Street 750...

NEW





The Iron and the Forty-Eight are two of the key Harleys to be 'Reborn in Barcelona' this year...

BRANDISHING THE IRON

Iron 883 | Price: £7495 (Colour option); £7695 (Hard Candy colour option)
Engine: Air-cooled 883cc 52.4lb-ft @ 3750rpm | **Tank:** 12.5 litre
Claimed economy: 51mpg
Seat height: 775mm | **Weight:** 255kg

The Iron was one of the early Dark Custom bikes, and is the entry point for many riders new to the Harley brand. For 2016 it gains new, preload-adjustable rear shocks and fatter cartridge-damped front forks. The seat has been redesigned for comfort, and along with several cosmetic tweaks, it's got lighter nine-spoke cast aluminium wheels.

It's surprisingly cramped (I'm 5ft 10in) if – like me – you expect a laid-back seating position. It soon feels right though, and even journalists over 6ft found it easy to get on with.

As long as you have the keyless ignition fob in your pocket, just climb on and thumb the starter. Despite its sleeved-down capacity, the Iron has the distinctive, lazy Harley throb. If you like to be constantly reminded of your engine as you wait at the traffic lights, this is a machine to buy – shaking and

hot, it feels alive. By inline four standards, that peak torque point sounds low, but the rev limiter cuts in at 5930rpm; in the city, and on tight twisty mountain roads I spent a lot of time in first gear – the 883 lump feels as if it could use an extra gear to break the step between first and second, but it's still an enjoyably lazy motor to use.

It just needs working a little harder than the bigger variant in the Forty-Eight, or indeed the water-cooled Street 750 engine. The gearbox is pure Harley-Davidson; extremely positive, with every change accompanied by the sound of a hammer striking an anvil. Like dry clutches on old Ducatis, it's an aural treat the owner will love.

At first glance many of the parts look quite basic, but the quality of finish is very high, with great attention to detail. The single clock looks right, while the small LCD manages to include two trips, an odometer, a clock and a digital rev counter, which also shows what gear you're in. It's got self-cancelling indicators (though I still prefer traditional ones, as I'm in the habit of thumbing the button constantly) and ABS – an option in Europe – is standard on the UK bikes. There's no

lock on the petrol cap, though of course one is available as an option.

The Iron is easy to weave through city traffic, and the suspension feels well balanced, smoothing out bumps well. The brakes are adequate by the standards of the latest tech, but this is a different way of life, a different pace; it might be a Sportster by name, but it's no sportsbike. To the uninitiated the Harley is ponderous, to fans it's a relaxing, characterful ride.



ABOVE: New suspension, lighter wheels and an improved seat complement what was the entry-level Harley.

LEFT: Shocks on the Iron and the Forty-Eight are updated.



BIG CUBE STYLE

Forty-Eight | Price: £9675 (Vivid Black); £9875 (Colour option); £10,075 (Hard Candy colour option)

Engine: Air-cooled 1202cc
70.8lb-ft @ 3500rpm | **Tank:** 7.9 litre

Claimed economy: 48mpg

Seat height: 710mm | **Weight:** 252kg

Sat at the roadside, the Forty-Eight smelt of hot oil, and looked all of the solid 252kg of metal that it is. It's everything I think of when I consider a custom-style street bike, and the seating position gave me the biggest grin. Forward footpegs and a reach to the bars, it grumbles along, refusing to be rushed. It might not be the comfiest machine of the trip, but to me it just felt right.

It's got the full-fat version of the Iron engine, while the tank is a tiny 7.9 litre 'peanut' style, and the repositioned pegs make for a bike that feels quite different to the Iron. ABS is again standard, and as on the 883, the sensor is neatly tucked away, looking more like a traditional speedo cable drive.

The Forty-Eight is pretty well everything I want in a custom bike.

BOTTOM RIGHT: The Forty-Eight and Iron clocks pack a good amount of info into a classic design.

BELOW: The Forty-Eight's underslung mirrors are cool, and work surprisingly well.



The suspension felt a little more harsh than on the Iron – at one point on some particularly rough roads I was kicked clear of the seat (not helped by the fact you're unable to use your stretched-out legs to absorb the shock as on a standard seating configuration).

In many ways the bigger brother of the Iron, while I'd probably want to swap that small tank, I love the attitude of this bike – the chilled-out body position, the fat tyres, and that glorious engine. Sure, the pegs still scrape if you get excited on country roads, and no, it doesn't go fast, despite the capacious bores, but this just seems so right, and in Candy Red looks fantastic.



Test Ride

THE NEW BOY

Street 750 | Price: £5795 (Vivid Black); £5995 (Colour Option)

Engine: Liquid-cooled 749cc 44.5lb-ft @ 4000rpm | **Tank:** 13.1 litre

Claimed economy: 41mpg

Seat height: 710mm | **Weight:** 229kg

While it's been available in Europe for a year, now the Street 750 has made its way to the UK. We're the first to benefit from the uprated brakes – which now feature larger discs and Brembo calipers – neater, relocated wiring, new levers and brake pedal, and a relocated horn.

The 749cc Revolution X motor is a first; it's the only one in the H-D range – besides the V-Rod – to be fully water-cooled, as the Project Rushmore engines found in bikes like the Road Glide Ultra are water-cooled at the head only. It doesn't have the lazy signature throb, but it's still distinctive and characterful, with enough of that American pulse from the 60° Vee to not feel out of place within the company's line-up.

It also doesn't shake at a standstill, and of course it doesn't throw out all the heat of an air-cooled motor, which is great in town. What's most noticeable is how eager it is to spin up, and that's really clear on the road. Despite – on paper at least – being down on the Iron and Forty-Eight's peak torque, it feels by far the most snappy and usable motor, both in the city and on twisting country roads.



Custom potential

The Street 750 was launched in Europe in late 2014 for the 2015 model year; when Harley-Davidson created its Battle of the Kings dealer custom build competition, while the UK saw shops work on the Forty-Eight, other countries based their projects on the Street 750. With a budget of €4000 for parts (at least 75% of which must be official H-D), and a maximum of 50 hours' labour, the competition proved that totally unique machines are within the reach of many buyers. My favourite was the Scrambler shown here – it was billed to its buyer for about €20,000, but as many riders would no doubt want to do some of the work themselves, the fact that around half that cost is in labour makes for an exciting prospect.



On the motorway at around 60mph in top, it out-dragged the Iron, while the larger capacity of the Forty-Eight took a few seconds to catch up with the eager little 750.

The six-speed gearbox is much quieter and smoother than on other Harleys – it's still pretty positive (more so on the up-changes), though some of us noticed the occasional slight difficulty finding neutral. The whole experience feels smoothed out, neutered as if in a duvet of water-cooling. It doesn't make for a bad machine – far from it – but to H-D traditionalists, it's not same.

Indeed, the editor of *American-V* magazine put it to me that Harley had “now made a motorcycle”. Don't see that as a criticism of the other bikes in the range, but to a purist, this is quite a different proposition. Hopefully one that will bring even more new riders into the fold.

The 37mm non-adjustable forks and preload-adjustable twin rear shocks are “tuned for the rough pavement”, with two-pot floating calipers front and rear biting 300mm fixed single discs. But

there's no ABS – not even as an option. This seems likely to be a way of keeping the cost so competitive, and it's certainly not an option that felt like it was needed during the test ride.

Harley says the Street is designed for use in traffic, with a ‘tight wheelbase’ of 1535mm. This is actually a fraction longer than the Iron, at 1515mm, but it is shorter than Kawasaki Vulcan S, at 1575mm, and certainly helps provide a bike with a good, tight turning circle.

This is a budget machine, but it's been designed to be easy to ride, accessible, and fun. The target audience is ‘young urban adults’, and the company is keen to stress that the Street has all the H-D styling, but is intended to be more affordable. The 750 still has belt drive, a Milwaukee steel tank, and a 3D chrome badge (though it's not as solid feeling as the one on the Forty-Eight).

I don't like to pigeon-hole a motorcycle, but this really is a great machine for new riders. It's very unlikely that it'll be bought by current owners of Harleys, but those new to the brand could also be tempted.



Some of the parts do look cheaper than other machines in the Harley range – the shocks certainly don't look as great as those on the 2016 Iron and Forty-Eight, and the top yoke and switchgear doesn't have that high-quality look.

There are only two trips and an odometer on the dash – a rev counter would have been nice, particularly with this more eager engine. The swingarm is a simple box-section design, but this is a bike that costs little more than a non-ABS MT-07 – one of this year's bargain benchmarks. It's even available on PCP for a £999 deposit, then just £79 per month.

That switchgear is a standard layout, which is more likely to appeal to riders new to the brand, as well as those who may have taken their lessons on another bike. It's not got keyless ignition, though you do get a locking fuel cap. There is also a fair bit of plastic on the bike, but it'd be easy to remove, and again – this is all about the potential for customisation.

We were all surprised by the Street 750; it's an eager bike, incredibly easy to ride in the city, and fun out on the twisty roads. It is a cruiser, so the rubber-covered pegs do touch down if you start trying to hustle things – a couple of journos also scraped the side-stand bracket on the left, and the exhaust heat shield on the right. There are no hero blobs, so it's not as obvious when you touch the rubber sleeve down – I'd have preferred to have the metal pegs that give you that extra warning (and are easy to replace).

The budget suspension works fine, and appears to have been well considered. You don't need to adjust it as it's not going to be pushed beyond its limits on a track day, or raced across

ABOVE: The Street's dash is tidy, but not as informative as the others.

the mountain at the Isle of Man. The brakes are equally practical for most riding, though of course if you compare them to the latest radial monoblocs, then you'll be finding you need to use four, instead of two fingers to stop in a hurry. But to rush things on a Harley-Davidson is to miss the point, and while this new engine is a triumph of US style, combined with a very easy nature, the attitude is still the same – relax, and enjoy the ride.

The turning circle is great, the steering quick and easy, and of course that very low seat inspires confidence. The pegs are set in such a way that they make paddling the machine more awkward, and I wish Harley would add springs to their footpegs, but it feels a fairly natural riding position. I'd want to push the pegs forward, but there's little doubt that'll be an accessory option, particularly if more variants of this platform emerge.

The Street 750 is fast. For a Harley. It's light. For a Harley. And it's cheap. For a Harley. In fact, it's cheap by anyone's standards; it's not got the go of an MT-07 of course, but it's fun, it's relaxing, and it's got a whole lot of character. It's an introduction to biking for some, a welcome to the Harley brand for others. Or it's a reaffirmation of motorcycling's most established custom brand. Heritage stretching back 113 years in a bargain-priced bike that anyone can ride. Sounds like a great deal to me.

BUYING IN

Some people say that there are bikers, and then there are Harley riders. Some others say that there are those who hate Harleys, and those who've tried them. I disagree with both sentiments; if you're on two wheels (or three), you're a



Closest Rival

KAWASAKI VULCAN S £6049

Designed with a focus on ergonomics, style and increased rider confidence, the Kawasaki's 649cc engine is a retuned version of that found in the Versys 650 and ER6. It makes 46.5lb-ft @ 6000rpm, and is a very easy motor to get along with. But it doesn't have the V-twin charm some might want. With a 705mm seat height, it's just as accessible as the Harley, and while it's a little more expensive, it does include ABS.

biker to my eyes, but the pace of life on a Harley-Davidson is different to that on a Fireblade, so it's not going to be for everyone. You'd still be a fool not to try one though – you might well be surprised at just how much fun they are to ride, and once you're in, the fantastic ownership experience, and welcoming dealer network will probably keep you loyal. During September and October, Harley is offering the chance to win your dream custom bike, designed with the help of Dais Nagao – H-D's senior industrial designer – in the States. I strongly recommend that you take a ride to a dealer for a go on one of the original customs... Long live the king.



“The custom trend has moved a bit quicker than we anticipated”

Jarno Middelbosch is the manager of marketing integration for EMEA (Europe, Middle East and Asia), and the man behind the huge Harley-Davidson custom build competition; Battle of the Kings.

In the US, 53% of bike sales are Harleys, but it's growing rapidly here too, with an increasing number of young people coming into the brand.

MSL: What was the thinking behind Battle of the Kings?

Jarno: Two years ago we saw the whole custom movement take off – the media talking about Ducati Scrambler, Yamaha Yard-Built, BMW R-nineT – and we were like ‘Wait a minute, this is our turf!’ We’ve been doing custom for so many years, maybe in a different way; I guess a lot of people, when they think about Harley they think about the 90s and Orange County Choppers... So we thought ‘we can do relevant custom bikes too – we can do scramblers, café racers... all sorts of stuff’. But there’s less visibility of that, so we started this concept.

One of the key differences between us and the other brands is that we have the dealer network that can actually build these bikes, whereas a lot of the other manufacturers use independent builders. We have the expertise, knowledge and experience in our dealer network, so we should be focusing on that. The custom kings are the guys in our workshops doing some really creative stuff.

MSL: Did the other manufacturers – like Yamaha – catch you off guard?

Jarno: No, I wouldn’t say they caught us off guard, but I guess maybe the custom trend has moved a bit quicker than we anticipated. I think Yamaha’s taken a slightly different direction, and with Scrambler Ducati has positioned it as a different brand almost. But for us it’s in our DNA; we’ve been doing custom for years – our first parts and accessories catalogue came out in 1915.

I think there’s still a bit of a brand barrier with Harley [riders seeing H-Ds as something outside of biking]... I guess there are stereotypes around the brand. I come from a Harley family myself, but when I was asked to come and work for Harley even I wasn’t sure. When they said ‘one of our key goals over the next couple of years is trying to attract people from other brands’, I thought ‘that’s a great goal’. Everything we’ve launched recently, like Street, Iron... even projects like Livewire, they show a completely different side to the brand and open people’s eyes and minds. Apart from the product, it’s all about showing how Harley-Davidson has innovative technologies too. The Iron is a great example – 95% of Iron owners are new to the brand, so it’s a great product to get new people in.

MSL: Have people forgotten what can be done with a Harley in the excitement of the other brands?

Jarno: I’m not sure if they’ve forgotten, but I think Wheels and Waves [the custom bike festival in Biarritz] is a great example that I don’t think they’re as brand loyal any more – certainly in the younger generation customers, they’re more about a certain type of bike; a certain stance or look, over a certain brand. I ride with a lot of guys who own Ducatis, Hondas, whatever... I think it’s shifted. I’m 31, and have got a lot of friends around that age who have gone from sports bikes to custom bikes. I worked for Ducati before, where we launched the 1098, Panigale etc... awesome products, but you’re never going to use it all on the street.

I live in Amsterdam, and for a lot of young people living in cities, getting from A to B on a cool looking bike is more important than having the latest, greatest, fastest bikes, and having to put on full leathers.

More people are moving into cities; not just in Europe – in Asia it’s going even faster than over here. I think the whole urban mobility thing is something we can benefit from as a brand. The Street is doing really well in India, for example – it was voted bike of the year.”

MSL: The emissions laws cause slight changes, but do all markets have the same bikes?

Jarno: Basically they are the exact same machines – we make them in Kansas in the US, and in India as well. They are made with exactly the same manufacturing process, the same parts being manufactured in different locations, so they’re just being swapped. Assembly happens in India and assembly happens in the US.

The bikes produced in the States are for the US, and some Southern American markets. The rest of the world is from India. It’s a big focal point for our new CEO and board of directors – to make sure we’ve standardised the whole manufacturing and assembly process. As long as you standardise, it doesn’t really matter who does the work.

Even on ‘all American motorcycles’, there are parts on there which are Brembo brakes for example – they’re not manufactured in the US. There’s technology on there like Bosch – that’s not from the US either. We don’t get too hung up on it, but I think it’s less of an issue in Europe, than maybe in the US where they are very patriotic. The iPhone is ‘Designed in California, produced in China’. For the Street it’s fairly similar – designed in the US and produced in India.

Two years ago we saw the custom movement take off... we were like ‘Wait a minute, this is our turf!’



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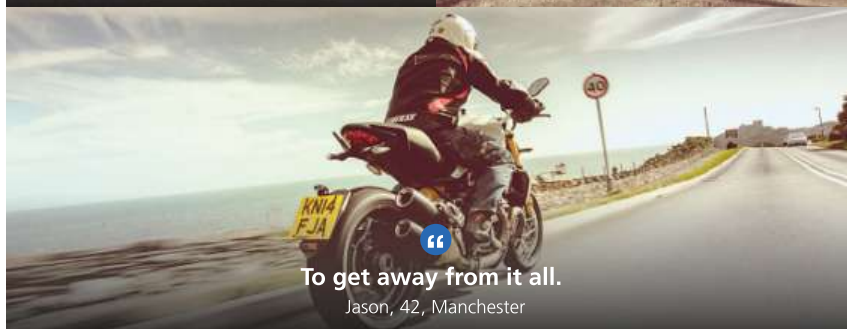
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“
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2016 KTM 690 Duke prototype



IT'S FUN TO BE SINGLE

Not due to be revealed until November, *MSL* has already ridden KTM's new – vibration free – big thumper...

WORDS: Alan Cathcart PHOTOS: Heiko Mandl

KTM isn't just Europe's largest motorcycle manufacturer, with 88,531 units built in the first six months of this year (up 25.6% compared to 2014). It's also the most successful in competition, having won over 250 world championships to date in various classes including road racing and countless national titles. All with single-cylinder machinery.

If anyone was going to reinvent the street single, it'd have to be the Austrian creators of the iconic Duke, which set the standard for road-legal minimalism for the past two decades.

KTM is about to take the concept to the next level with a seriously improved version of the 690 Duke that's set to be launched at Milan's EICMA Show in November, and which I was honoured with the chance to spend a day riding in pre-production prototype form through the hills and valleys around the KTM factory in Mattighofen, near Salzburg.

POWERING THE DUKE

KTM has created a new short-stroke version of its four-valve water-cooled sohc LC4 engine, which was already considerably improved in 2012 when the fourth iteration of the motor appeared with a digital ride by wire throttle. Coupled with revised cylinder head porting and a choice of three riding modes, plus dual ignition with differential mapping for each of the two sparkplugs, it achieved the most power ever attained by a street single from any manufacturer.



But for 2016 KTM's engineers have upped the stakes still further, for reasons which Sebastian Sekira, the Austrian company's youthful vice-president of street development, explains: "Even though the 690 Duke was so far quite successful, it had some clear issues in the marketplace," he says.

"We knew that the vibration was always something that some people would criticise. The hardcore single-cylinder user doesn't care about that – in fact, they love it. But other people don't like it so much, so our engine guys made a very good improvement to reduce the vibration still further. The other issue in this midrange class is that most of our competitors have twins, often with more outright performance. The new 690 Duke addresses that, we believe effectively."

For 2016 the Duke will be powered by an all-new 693cc short-stroke LC4 motor with a 105mm cylinder bore, coupled with an 80mm stroke against the previous dimensions of 102 x 84.5mm for 690cc. The bigger bore – housing a fatter, forged three-ring piston – provides space for a pair of 2mm larger inlet valves, each now measuring 42mm in diameter. The exhaust valves remain unchanged at 34mm.

Coupled with the shorter stroke and a redesigned combustion chamber fed by the same 46mm Keihin throttle body, the rev limiter on the new LC4 motor has been raised by 500rpm to 9000rpm, resulting in a claimed 7% increase in maximum power to 73bhp at 8600rpm (though final specs for this ongoing work in progress are subject to confirmation prior to the official launch).

By remapping the Keihin ECU for 2016, plus further development of the differential-spark dual ignition system

ABOVE: An additional balancer shaft has eliminated vibration.

ABOVE RIGHT: Three riding modes are easily accessed from the left bar.

in the redesigned cylinder head, KTM claims to have liberated a greater spread of power throughout the rev range, plus a 6% increase in torque and a smoother, stronger pickup from low revs. And all while meeting new Euro 4 noise and emissions requirements.

The 690R variant of the Duke gains 2bhp more over and above that, thanks to an Akrapovič silencer. It comes as part of a package that includes fully adjustable WP suspension, a Brembo Monoblock front brake caliper, plus a slightly lower and supposedly sportier taper-section handlebar and forged aluminium footrests that are a little higher and mounted further back.

NO MORE VIBES

KTM has retained the single counter-balancer mounted low down, in front of the crankshaft on the new motor, but to eliminate any remaining tinges

has then added a secondary balance shaft in the cylinder head, driven by the camchain. To create the space, the camdrive resembles that of a dohc engine, so the chain firstly drives the camshaft, then the counterbalancer mounted adjacent to it.

The inlet valves are now driven directly off the cams via finger followers, with longer rocker arms in order to create more space to integrate the secondary balance shaft. The roller bearings in the previous motor have been replaced with friction followers, of which the contact surfaces are Diamond-Like coated, with an oil spray directed on to them.

The 2016 Duke's rolling chassis is essentially the same as before (besides a new colour) except for new triple-clamps with a 28mm offset. Being 4mm shorter, there's now 122.7mm of trail, compared to 118.7mm previously.





ABOVE: New TFT dash will be seen across KTM's range.

ABOVE RIGHT: Seat is the same height as before, but more accommodating.



"We wanted to make the bike easier to control, and to stop the feeling of self-steering, so you had to keep making small corrections via the handlebar," says Sekira. "Now the Duke really does what you want it to do, and you don't need to adapt your riding style to the needs of the bike's geometry. Just make a U-turn when you start off with the bike and you note it immediately – it's just a different behaviour."

Despite the similar geometry, there's a more comfortable – but still relatively upright – riding position thanks mainly to a new, more spacious seat. It's still a two-piece item with a fairly decently sized passenger pad, but it's flatter than before so you have more room to move back and forth on it.

You'll want to do that when hustling through tight, twisty turns; sitting forward to load up the front tyre in

bends then sliding backwards for the exit to weight up the back wheel – especially in the absence of traction control on this prototype – before tucking down over the taper-section one-piece aluminium handlebar that gives such great leverage.

Plus, the new seat is definitely narrower than before at the front, which will make it easier for shorter riders to manage the Duke when stationary. "On the present bike we wanted to show people that this was not a super hard, super sporty, only-for-specialists Duke model," says Sekira. "We wanted to make it seem more friendly, but our market analysis showed that all kinds of people including women and beginner riders bought the bike, not only male single specialists. We now made a seat which lets you play more easily with the 2016 Duke, without decreasing the comfort at all"

ON THE ROAD

From a fast 1400rpm idle, as you blip the throttle you instantly realise that there's zero vibration of any kind through the handlebar, footrests or seat. Plus the very effective and well-placed mirrors don't quiver in the slightest – even at max revs. This is like no other single I've ever ridden, road or race, none of which were as completely devoid of the slightest tingles at any revs as the new KTM motor.

They're steady right up to the nine grand limiter, at which point the digital throttle just stops accelerating, without as brutal a cutout as on a bike without ride by wire. But it's not characterless, because you've still got that mellow exhaust note echoing in your ears to remind you what kind of machine you're riding.

In first gear the 690 pulls off idle with hardly any slipping of the clutch – as you'd expect any decent street single to do nowadays – but with the verve and acceleration that a middleweight twin would be happy to boast. The new short-stroke motor – weighing just 40kg – picks up revs improbably fast for a street single, delivering a completely linear build of power in a bike weighing just 159kg.

While the motor definitely spins up faster than the previous 690 Duke's, it pays to keep it revving above 4000rpm for wide-open acceleration without any transmission snatch. Doing so will also access the clearly fatter midrange power and torque, in spite of its shorter stroke, which you'd expect would make it more peaky.

Three riding modes are easily accessed from the left bar: Sport delivers greater zest in acceleration, whereas Street suits everyday use, with the less aggressive pickup being easier to use in traffic and at lower revs. Had



Sebastian Sekira, KTM's vice-president of street development talks to Alan Cathcart.



the traction control been working on this prototype, I would apparently have found that there's a different amount for each mode, with obviously the most on Rain, which also knocks power back a fair bit to offer greater control on slippery surfaces.

Cast alloy rims carrying 17in Metzeler M7RR rubber gave great grip, and the 2016 Duke handles as well as it's always done. You can keep up a turn of speed in faster bends in a way that's always been the trademark of a super single, while the well set-up WP 43mm upside down fork and progressive-rate link monoshock rear (adjustable for preload and rebound damping), readily eat up surface imperfections. The die-cast one-piece aluminium swingarm is unchanged, while the way the engine is carried as a load-bearing member in the chrome-moly tubular steel trellis frame helps deliver a stiff but light package that handles very predictably.

I can't truthfully say I noticed any difference in the way the new Duke – with added trail – steered compared to the old one, which always struck me as being agile and stable at the same time, but this new version felt totally planted in turns, with ultra-neutral steering. Basically, the new Duke goes exactly where you point it, with no trace of the handlebar waving slightly in your hands as it apparently did on the old bike, even if I can't remember it doing that!

The single 320mm front disc gripped by a radial four-pot Brembo caliper on the prototype worked really well, though the rear 240mm disc and

Brembo single-piston caliper seemed slightly weak and more dirt-derived than tarmac-friendly. An Italian-made Adler APTC slipper clutch is still fitted as standard, just as before, which generates additional pressure on the plates to allow the clutch springs to be up to one-third softer than on other transmissions – hence the single-finger operation which makes the 690 Duke so easy to ride in towns. It works brilliantly well under braking too, even when nearing the rev limiter on the overrun.

Also new for 2016 is a good-looking light-sensitive TFT dash that's very easy to read even in bright sunlight. It's also great in darkness – watching the screen switch back and forth between day and night settings as I rode along forest roads confirmed how well it works. KTM's previous stock digital dash – as used on everything from its Indian-made 125 Duke single right up to many of its maxi-twin models – already set the industry standard for function and clarity, and now this upgrade promises a similar level of standout excellence as it's adopted across the Austrian company's entire range of models in coming years.

As an avid proponent of the streetbiking minimalism epitomised by KTM's products, after my day aboard the new 690 Duke I can only applaud the company's engineers for creating what is surely the best street single I've yet ridden. It really is that good – especially as according to KTM the new model will be available at a price very close to the existing 690 Duke's £7199. Less is indeed more...

TOP RIGHT: Front brakes work well; the 690R will get a monobloc caliper.

RIGHT: Rear brakes, at least on this prototype, feel more suited to off-road.



Specification

2016 KTM 690 DUKE (PROTOTYPE)

Price: Around £7200

Engine: 693cc water-cooled sohc four-valve single-cylinder four-stroke with chain camshaft drive, dual ignition, dual counter-balancers, and electric start

Power: 73bhp (54kW) @ 8600rpm

Torque: 55lb-ft (74Nm) @ 5500rpm

Gearbox: 6-speed

Frame: Chrome-moly tubular-steel trellis frame

Suspension: (F) 43mm WP inverted telescopic fork offering 135mm wheel travel; (R) WP monoshock and Pro-Lever variable-rate link, offering 135mm wheel travel

Wheels/tyres (as tested): (F) 120/70R17 Metzeler M7RR on 3.50in cast aluminium wheel; (R) 160/60R17 Metzeler M7RR on 5.00in cast aluminium wheel

Brakes: (F) 1 x 320mm Brembo stainless steel disc with radially-mounted four-piston Brembo caliper and two-channel switchable Bosch ABS; (R) 1 x 240mm steel disc with single-piston Brembo floating caliper

Kerb weight: 159kg

Seat height: 835mm

Contact: www.ktm.com

NAKED DELIGHTS

It's one of the most vibrant and exciting markets in biking; if you're after a powerful naked street machine, your shopping list should look something like this...

WORDS: Bruce Wilson PHOTOGRAPHY: Joe Dick

APRILIA TUONO FACTORY

Price: £14,635
Engine: 1077cc V4
Power: 175bhp
Torque: 89lb-ft
Kerb weight: 204kg
Seat height: 825mm

KTM 1290 SUPER DUKE R

Price: £13,999
Engine: 1301cc V-twin
Power: 180bhp
Torque: 106lb-ft
Kerb weight: 205kg
Seat height: 835mm

DUCATI MONSTER 1200

Price: £10,795
Engine: 1198cc 90° V-twin
Power: 135bhp
Torque: 87lb-ft
Kerb weight: 209kg
Seat height: 785-810mm

NEW

SUZUKI GSX-S1000 ABS

Price: £9499
Engine: 999cc inline-four
Power: 143bhp
Torque: 78lb-ft
Kerb weight: 209kg
Seat height: 810mm

HONDA CB1000R

Price: £9999
Engine: 998cc inline-four
Power: 123bhp
Torque: 73lb-ft
Kerb weight: 222kg
Seat height: 825mm



Naked bikes sales have increased by 30% this year. According to the Motorcycle Industry Association, UK riders have already snapped up 21,783 of them, compared to 16,697 for the same period last year. It's become one of the biggest and fastest growing sectors in the entire bike market, undoubtedly helped by a fresh wave of technically sophisticated new models.

Most major manufacturers have released at least one new naked within the past three years, including Suzuki's GSX-S1000, Aprilia's Tuono Factory, KTM's 1290 Super Duke R and Ducati's Monster 1200, with the incredible new 1200R about to launch

(expect a full test in next month's issue). Even the Honda CB1000R, which joins our wish list of powerful machines, has had a reworked look for 2015, reiterating how seriously every manufacturer is taking the class.

With naked bikes accounting for almost a quarter of all motorcycle sales in the UK, and achieving an even higher percentage in many other European nations, the entire bike scene is ever-changing. Not everyone needs a full-on adventure tourer, and while the industry craves younger riders, there's no denying that a lot of today's more mature motorcyclists want the thrill of the sportsbikes they cut their teeth on, with a more upright riding position. Many are also looking for lighter

machines, and while the bikes we're testing here are at the premium end of the naked market, they've got all the pared-back attitude many riders crave.

We take road testing seriously here at *Motorcycle Sport & Leisure* magazine. Rather than popping out for a jolly day of photography, we carefully choose experienced riders that reflect our readership, then give them the bikes for at least two weeks. We expect them to ride the machines every day, finding out what it's like to spend real time with their machine, racking up plenty of miles in the process. We regrouped for a 200 mile ride in Norfolk, finding out the good – and the bad – of each motorcycle from the riders who lived with them...

Suzuki GSX-S1000 ABS

Tested by: Clive White | Price: £9499 | Power: 143bhp | Average economy: 41.7mpg

I really like the Suzuki. It looks great, the motor packs a punch and it's relatively comfortable, too. It works well as a street bike, but you can get away with riding it on longer stints. I clocked three hours of constant riding on the GSX at one point and found myself able to move without too many aches when I got off; the leg space is generous and the knee angle isn't too sporty, either. The wide bars allow you a domineering and comfortable riding position and the seat is really well padded, so it's not too harsh on the rider.

In town, I thought that the Suzuki's motor lets it down. The fuelling is pretty rough and I found myself being nudged forward or rearward when I made alterations to the throttle position. It's as if the bike's too lean, so you have to try and learn to ride with a really smooth throttle hand. Out in the sticks, the engine can still feel a bit choppy but you don't seem to notice it as much when you've added a bit of speed into the equation.

I was pleasantly surprised by the rate at which the inline-four accelerated, offering very linear power at all times. There's a notable power surge when you get over 7000rpm, as if the bike really starts to kick in and go. Below that it isn't flat, but it feels a lot less menacing. I was also impressed by the seamless gearbox, which made light work of shifting both up and down the box. The bike doesn't have a quick-shifter, but it didn't really need one, in my opinion. You can of course perform clutchless



It might be small, but the dash is a brilliant design.

up-shifts without any bother, just rolling off the throttle momentarily.

The Suzuki's a pretty sharp handler; you sit quite far forward, which makes you feel as if you're riding the front wheel, a bit like on an off-road bike, so to get the GSX turning takes very little effort, no matter what kind of speed you're riding at. It also holds a good line in the bends and performs well under acceleration. The only criticism I have is how flighty the bike can get when you hit a few road imperfections. It has a tendency to shake its head, and can catch you off guard quite easily. Changing my body position made no difference, so it was more a case of being a bit choosier with the roads I took, or backing off somewhat when things got rough.

I never once had a power-provoked moment on the Suzuki, despite riding it with the traction control fully off most of the time. There's a tendency to fit the rider aid to everything these days, but I didn't feel it was all that needed. Still, it's very easy to alter the bike's setup using the selector buttons on the left side of the bars. Another



Specification

SUZUKI GSX-S1000 ABS

Price: £9499

Engine: 999cc, liquid-cooled inline-four

Power: 143bhp (107kW) @ 10,000rpm

Torque: 78lb-ft (106Nm) @ 9500rpm

Transmission: 6-speed, chain final drive

Frame: Aluminium twin-spar

Tank volume: 17 litres

Economy: 41.7mpg (tested)

Wheelbase: 1460mm

Kerb weight: 209kg

Seat height: 810mm

Contact: www.suzuki-gb.co.uk



The Suzuki's engine modes are easily switched from the bar controls.

great thing was being able to read the settings so clearly on the fully-digital dash – Suzuki has done a corker of a job in producing the clocks. Whether looking for your speed, traction control setting, gear selection or rpm, everything is crystal-clear, and it's also mounted right in the rider's eye-line, so you don't have to look away from the road for more than an instant.

The front headlight design's not really to my liking – it looks like an ant – but I am quite fond of the rest of the package. I like the flowing lines and how smartly condensed the whole package is. It's actually quite hard to pick fault with the bike, although one area which does lose it a few points is the side-stand; it functions perfectly well, but the actual product looks as though it's been made from a squashed piece of tubing. A small detail and by no means significant enough for me to not want to own one of these bikes.



Pillion's perspective

Much like the Honda, the pillion's seat comes across as a bit of an afterthought. It's very small and quite simply isn't fit for any kind of long miles. It's easy to get on, but just as easy to fall off, owing to the lack of any real grab holds. There is a strap across the front of the seat, but putting your hands under it forces you to sit even further rearward.



The fuelling was a bit of a disappointment to some riders.

The Suzuki's wide bars allow you a domineering and comfortable position...

Second opinion

BRUCE WILSON

The Suzuki's very easy on the eye, nicely finished with plenty of great features littering its vibrantly-coloured bodywork. A closer look doesn't disappoint, with the Renthal bars, stubby exhaust and the easy-to-read digital dash each contributing further to the bike's aesthetic appeal.

From a riding perspective, the Suzuki's biggest flaw is its poor fuelling, which is best described as being aggressively snatchy and unsettling, both when rolling on and off the throttle. To be fair, it's something that divides opinion, as editor John found it quite acceptable on the launch of the faired model. The motor itself is a good performer, albeit somewhat lacking in oomph when compared to the Aprilia I had been riding, requiring an abundance of revs to get going.

The gearbox is smooth, and the tech on the bike is easy to navigate and actuate on the go. The Suzuki is very agile, but easily upset by road imperfections, which cause the front end to feel nervous and flighty. I liked the stance of the bike's riding position, finding the leg room to be ample and the bars non-aggressively located.



Brembo monoblocs are predictable.

Meet the testers

NEIL WINDSOR

42, Yamaha
Super Tenere
owner



Bike mad, Neil never needs any persuasion to get out and ride. He's just completed a 17-day tour of Europe on his Yamaha and can't wait to get out and explore elsewhere.

ROGER JONES

68, BMW
R1200GS owner



An avid motorcyclist all year round, Roger's garage features more bikes than some dealerships, from his owned-from-new BMW R100R, to his winter-hack Kawasaki Tengai.

BRUCE WILSON

28, Kawasaki
550 café racer
owner



MSL's deputy editor has ridden since he was nine, having competed both on- and off-road. He clocks up tens of thousands of miles every year on a huge variety of machines.

JOHN MILBANK

43, Ducati
Monster S4R
owner



A lover of all-things two-wheeled, John's relentless passion for motorcycling has led him to the editorship of MSL. If he's not out riding a bike, he'll be in the garage tinkering.

CLIVE WHITE

52, Yamaha
RD350 LC owner



Rapier Paintworks in Hull, as well as many pristine restored classic motorcycles. A successful racer across several decades, he now gets his kicks from touring.

Honda CB1000R



Tested by: Roger Jones | Price: £9999 | Power: 123bhp | Average economy: 42.6mpg

The first time I saw the Honda I couldn't get over how small it appeared, seeming at first to be sized more like a 600 than a thou. A walk around and you can't miss the single-sided swinging-arm, which is sprayed in white paint – while I thought it looked a treat when bright and clean, I couldn't help but picture it lathered in chain lube and road crud, slightly putting me off the concept.

Closer inspection of the unit

highlighted some manufacturing blemishes from the casting processing and all the welds – these aren't really noticeable with traditional black, and I know I'm being very picky, but that's how closely I like to look at things.

I'm not a great fan of the faux-carbon fibre graphics on the tank and radiator shroud, or the styling of the headlight. But hey, if we all liked the same things, wouldn't life be boring? So let's get a bit more upbeat... I put a

lot of miles on the Honda, and from the off I was really chuffed with the ergonomics. The wide and tall-mounted bars thankfully aren't straight, having a reverse bend to them which ensures your elbows tuck in to your torso and limit your exposure to buffeting. The seat is 825mm tall, but because of its narrow profile at the front I found I could comfortably plant a foot on the floor. I liked the position of the pegs too, which gave me plenty of room and encouraged a relaxed knee angle.

I found the clocks a little too low, which made picking out the speed on the all-digital dash less easy, and I was disappointed not to see a gear indicator or economy gauge. I was more pleased with the positioning of the brake and clutch levers, which are adjustable for span. The bike lacks a lot of other buttons to press, being relatively devoid of tech in this company, which does keep things clutter-free, and I like the feeling that I'm more connected to the bike. There is ABS of course, and the Nissin calipers proved more than adequate for all of my riding.

One of the CB's biggest strengths is its handling; throughout the test I was constantly blown away at how easy the Honda was to ride, proving to be very agile and forgiving in the bends. It's not



Specification

HONDA CB1000R

Price: £9999

Engine: 998cc, liquid-cooled inline-four

Power: 123bhp (92kW) @ 10,000rpm

Torque: 73lb-ft (99Nm) @ 7750rpm

Transmission: 6-speed, chain final drive

Frame: Aluminium backbone-type

Tank volume: 17 litres

Economy: 42.6mpg (tested)

Wheelbase: 1445mm

Kerb weight: 222kg

Seat height: 825mm

Contact: www.honda.co.uk

the kind of bike to catch you out, regardless of the speeds you're riding at, and the stability of the Honda is very impressive, never feeling twitchy or awkward. I also found myself a big fan of the engine thanks to its versatility and general performance. It would pull smoothly from 2000rpm in sixth gear, delivering linear and predictable power. Likewise, when I wanted to get a wriggle on, the motor was more than happy to oblige. The gearbox was impressively slick and the fuelling was seamless, especially in town environments.

My time with the Honda's been very pleasurable and it's really impressed me in so many ways. If anything, it's surprised me – I saw the other machines on the test and expected to be wowed by the exotic Italians, blown away by the Suzuki or maybe even feel an affinity to the Super Duke, seeing as



ABOVE: The speed is rather tucked away on the clocks.

RIGHT: Switchgear is refreshingly free of clutter.

I have a long-term test KTM Super Adventure. The Honda didn't inspire me at first, but I guess I should have expected that really – it simply works very well. If you're obsessed with detail, or just want something to show off on, maybe it's not the first choice, but as a more practical machine it's got an awful lot going for it.

If I were in the market for a naked bike – despite a few niggles – this would sit at the top of my wish list, as I could easily imagine putting plenty of miles on it with some light luggage.

One of the CB's biggest strengths is its handling; it's just so easy to ride.

Second opinion

NEIL WINDSOR

To my eyes, this bike defines Honda perfectly; it does all that you ask of it, but delivers no truly outstanding character.

The engine's smooth and plentiful in performance, but most certainly not overwhelming. I was impressed by the versatility of the motor, which would pull from really low down in the revs, but really needing revving over 6000rpm to feel as though it had woken up. It proved a very manageable bike in the bends, not being too sporting, but agile and stable. Comfort levels were decent, too, to the extent that I'd be happy riding the bike on long trips. It was the only one of the bikes that didn't feature Brembo monoblocks, but I found the Nissins were well-suited to a more everyday riding style as they weren't too aggressive at biting. Style-wise, the Honda looks old and I'm not sure what they were thinking when they decided to paint the swingarm white. The nose fairing reminds me of a gas mask... It's not my cup of tea.



Pillion's perspective

The Honda's pillion seat won some points for being low and easy to step onto, but not much else about it was worthy of praise. The small seat was hard and slippery, made worse by high pegs and inadequate grab holds located underneath the seat pod. Sitting right at the end of the sub-frame, sharp acceleration could make you feel like you'd fall off the back.





Ducati Monster 1200

Tested by: John Milbank | Price: £10,795 | Power: 135bhp | Average economy: 47.3mpg

I can't believe I'm saying this, but after a week with the Monster, it appears to be something of a great all-rounder. As the owner of a 2008 Monster S4R, I pulled rank and demanded the Ducati for this test. It's clearly an evolution of the machine originally created back in 1992 – the steel trellis frame might be a bit shorter now, and there's certainly a lot more plastic covering various parts, but it's unmistakably a Monster.

Maybe 'all-rounder' is a bit generous – after all, there's no screen, no fairing, and you're not about to bolt a load of hard luggage to it. Yet despite the small form and 'chopped' tail, the seat is big, wide, low and comfortable, with the bars and pegs creating a very natural riding position. Wind-blast isn't a problem at legal speeds, but while your right foot isn't pushed aside when resting the balls of your feet on the pegs as it is on my bike, it does still feel a touch awkward when setting your feet back. It's a minor niggle though, especially when compared to the older model.

Maybe I'm a bit too old fashioned, but the new bike's styling, while stunning, just doesn't have the classic look of the older machine – for me

there are slightly too many unnecessary details on the plastic parts. But that's personal opinion... the one thing I will moan about is the new dash. A purely digital screen, the information on offer is great, and it works a treat at night, but in bright sunlight it varies from being a little unclear, to totally disappearing.

When you can see it, it changes depending on the riding mode selected – Sport, Touring and Urban – which give full power, a softer throttle

response, and a limit of 100bhp respectively. Strangely, there's no gear indicator, which seems an odd omission on such a high-tech dash. Personally, I'd prefer dials, but I'm stuck in my ways...

Grumbles aside, this is an incredible machine – the riding position is spot on for me, lacking the perched feeling of the KTM (or worse, the Aprilia), and the exhaust is a masterpiece of Eurocrat appeasement... how the engineers tuned such a perfect growl





Ducati continues to evolve its motors, and this one is superb.



Specification

DUCATI MONSTER 1200

Price: £10,795

Engine: 1198cc, liquid-cooled L-twin

Power: 135bhp (99.3kW) @ 8750rpm

Torque: 87lb-ft (118Nm) @ 7250rpm

Transmission: 6-speed, chain final drive

Frame: Tubular steel trellis-type

Tank volume: 17.5 litres

Economy: 47.3mpg (tested)

Wheelbase: 1511mm

Kerb weight: 209kg

Seat height: 785-810mm (adjustable)

Contact: www.ducatiuk.com

with the odd burble and pop, while keeping immaculate fuelling and still toeing the line of ever-tightening regulations is a stroke of genius. The motor spins up very freely, and while it's not offensively loud, it makes all the right noises, at all the right times.

Surprisingly, this 1198cc motor produces just 5bhp more, 750rpm earlier than my 998cc's claimed figures. It also makes 10lb-ft more, 250rpm earlier. It doesn't sound a huge amount, but the difference is noticeable. Whereas the older Testastretta engine (a more compact cylinder head than previous models) gives strong grunt throughout the revs, then an explosion of power



Pillion's perspective

If you're prone to carrying a plus-one around with you, the Ducati is a very good option. It had the largest pillion seat among the bikes on test, which also happened to be the most comfy. It was easy to get on board, with plenty of leg space and dedicated handles to hold on to.

TFT dash is neat, but hard to read in bright sunlight.



from around 8000rpm, the new bike's delivery is much more progressive.

Lacking the new Multistrada's variable valve timing, the Monster still manages to be tractable at low revs. Above 2000rpm in town, as long as you're smooth and gentle with the throttle the bike will pull very happily, avoiding the lumpiness you'd expect from such a massive 90° twin. About 4000rpm is where it really gets exciting, and from there it's just a massive shove from behind if you want it.

My wheelie days are long gone, so I'm pleased that while the Monster would happily lift the front if you asked it to, it's well balanced, and more eager to just lay the power down and get going. The suspension is firm, but not uncomfortably so, and while the S model – at £13,350 – gains full Öhlins suspension, I found nothing wrong with the Showa kit fitted here. A brilliant roadster.



Radial calipers are confidence-inspiring.

Second opinion

ROGER JONES

Having spent most of my time on the Honda, riding the Ducati felt something of a disappointment. The big L-twin motor is great when kept on the boil, but compared to the Honda's inline four it's much lumpier at slower speeds. I found myself needing to keep it above 3000rpm, or it would shake and struggle to pull through the gears cleanly.

To me, the Ducati seemed to beg to be thrashed, but that didn't suit my riding style, or much of the environment. While John found it comfortable, I thought that I was a bit more crouched than I'd have liked – though of course, I had spent many miles on the Honda.

The dash was another niggle for me, as I found it hard to read the revs and the speed. I was surprised how well the Honda fitted me, so to be fair to the Ducati, it was just a bit too extreme. From what John said, I'd definitely not have liked the KTM, or the Aprilia!

KTM 1290 Super Duke R

Tested by: Neil Windsor | Price: £13,999 | Power: 180bhp | Average economy: 44.1mpg

In a world where it seems everything has to be sanitised, it's a real pleasure to come across bikes as raw as KTM's 1290 Super Duke R. In my opinion, it's exactly what a naked bike should be; unadulterated, powerful and brimming with attitude. This is no pussycat, and for that reason it won't be everyone's cup of tea. But I couldn't ask for more.

I love the look of the bike – the styling is bold and unique. The trellis frame draws your eye because of its design, but also thanks to its vibrant orange paint. It contrasts fantastically with the dark and moody bodywork, which is typically sharp in profile and futuristic-looking. The exhausts wrap wonderfully around the big V-twin motor, which really is the heart and soul of the KTM. I'm not normally a fan of drooping headlights or LEDs, but I can't get enough of the unit fitted to the 1290. Styling-wise, it works a treat.

And it rides as well as it looks. I came back from my first day with ear ache, having laughed so hard. This bike is a lunatic, and the challenge is to hold it back from unleashing crazy speeds – which it does so willingly. The motor makes 180bhp, but it's the torque that blew me away the most; it's relentless, no matter what gear you're in or where you are in the rev range, although the motor can get a little flustered if dropped under 3000rpm, provoking a jerky ride. You get used to that in time,



as well as the clunky first gear selection and its exceptionally small gear ratio. In town, I found myself often dithering between using first or second gear, regularly having to work the clutch to balance the gear changes and control the revs. Thankfully, the hydraulic lever

is light to operate, else I'd have a few more things to say about the ratios. Bizarrely, sixth gear is epically tall, and it's unlikely you'll ever need to select it if you don't intend to break the law.

The KTM's dash is well set in the rider's eye-line. There are actually two displays, divided with setup info on the left and the riding info, such as speed, revs and gear selection, on the right. It makes good sense and means that you're never left questioning your core info or setup options. The bike has loads of tech including power modes, ABS and traction control; it's easy to navigate, but you need to pull over if



The additional screen is a useful feature.



you want to alter your ABS or traction control, which isn't ideal.

Priced at a premium rate, I'm a little disappointed the bike doesn't come with electronically adjustable suspension, but even more so because the forks fitted don't offer any preload adjustment. I personally would expect to have it on a bike costing the best part of £14,000. Likewise, it lacks a quick-shifter. While I'm on a roll, I thought the plastic switchgear looked cheap, and the side-stand is simply ridiculous – it's so long that you have to carefully select the camber of ground you pull up on, else you might find your bike's fallen over when you return to it. The stand's also a bit tricky to deploy with your foot.

Moaning completed, I do rate the handling of this bike. It's a very firm ride and I was amazed at how easily it bounded into bends. I actually had to lessen my input, as the bike proved to just drop into corners. It's stable, confidence inspiring and you can change your line mid-corner with ease. Great stuff.

The longest period I experienced in the saddle was two hours straight. It wasn't the most comfortable of rides, but the large amount of leg space and relaxed knee angle make life easier, as do the well-placed wide bars. The seat is a little firm, but it's bearable. If I owned this bike, I would fit the softer saddle and probably the optional flyscreen, too.



Pillion's perspective

If you're tall, you're unlikely to find the climb up onto the Duke's pillion seat as challenging as it is for most other people. You are rewarded with a spacious and softly padded perch, plenty of leg room and a good view over the rider's lid. But what this bike really lacks is decent grab handles, rather than a small strap to dangle from.



The side-stand leaves the KTM treacherously perched.

Second opinion

JOHN MILBANK

The KTM felt like it was mocking me. That engine is pretty mental and it's all the time egging you on to wind the throttle back further. At slower speeds, the motor feels rather unrefined, and you have to manage its delivery carefully, especially when you're in Sport mode – the Ducati was the easier to ride. The KTM is also more firm, and you really do feel all of the road through the hard saddle.

From a handling point of view, the bike is impressive, proving very agile and stable. It got me out of trouble on a few occasions when pushing too hard and deep into corners, being able to help me reign it back. From my point of view, the motor just isn't pretty enough to be the overwhelming feature it is, though it is great to see such a raw design, if an expensive one.

Specification

KTM 1290 SUPER DUKE R

Price: £13,999

Engine: 1301cc, liquid-cooled 75° V-twin

Power: 180bhp (134kW) @ 8870rpm

Torque: 106lb-ft (144Nm) @ 6500rpm

Transmission: 6-speed, chain final drive

Frame: Tubular steel trellis-type

Tank volume: 18 litres

Economy: 44.1mpg (tested)

Wheelbase: 1482mm

Kerb weight: 205kg

Seat height: 835mm

Contact: www.ktm.com



Shock is fully adjustable, but the forks lack preload settings.

Aprilia Tuono Factory

Tested by: Bruce Wilson | Price: £14,635 | Power: 175bhp | Average economy: 37.9mpg

Don't buy this bike hoping for great mpg, amazing comfort or exquisite riding manners; that's not what the Tuono Factory's about. It's the supermodel of the naked world, designed with beauty and performance at the top of its agenda. It's unadulterated, exciting and raw. At its heart is a truly spectacular V4 motor, which makes an impressive 175bhp and an arm-wrenching 89lb-ft of torque.

Best of all, it sounds amazing regardless of whether it's on tick-over or up near the limiter. My first ride on the Aprilia was both frightful and thrilling. I had no idea what I was letting myself in for when I wound back the ride-by-wire throttle and unleashed hell. Set in Track mode – the liveliest of three power options – the front wheel relentlessly tried to hoist like a kite, and even short-shifting through the gearbox, using the factory-fitted quick-shifter, seemed to do little in quashing the possessed machine's hunt for speed.

I was quite literally a passenger, albeit a very wowed one. That one ride told me most of what I needed to know about the Tuono. And I liked what I'd learned. The performance of this

machine is staggering. It's too much for the road, to be honest, which is why I found myself riding it everywhere with traction and wheelie control engaged. The Tuono comes with eight differing levels of traction control, each of which can be toggled using a paddle-type selector on the left of its wide and tall-mounted handlebars; the lower the number, the more lively the ride. I was really impressed with how clever the tech was, engaging sufficiently when needed to quash any serious moments, but never really dampening the ride too much.

The tech on the bike matches the Aprilia Performance Ride Control (APRC) system used on the Italian brand's supersport RSV4, which explains its level of sophistication. The only thing which lets it down is the way you have to access and adjust the setup; everything's altered by a single button, which gives you access to a menu of options, the information being displayed on possibly the world's smallest digital dash. Changing anything is a slow and painful procedure, to the extent that I typically kept the same setup throughout my tenure.

Paddles allow control of settings.





Specification

APRILIA TUONO FACTORY

Price: £14,635

Engine: 1077cc, liquid-cooled 65° V4

Power: 175bhp (129kW) @ 11,000rpm

Torque: 89lb-ft (121Nm) @ 9000rpm

Transmission: 6-speed

Frame: Aluminium dual beam

Tank volume: 18.5 litres

Economy: 37.9mpg (tested)

Wheelbase: 1445mm

Kerb weight: 204kg

Seat height: 825mm

Contact: uk.aprilia.com

The dash, on which it's also hard to see your speed and gear selection, was one of the major blots on an otherwise exemplary experience. Other let downs included the bike's limited steering lock, a clutch lever without span adjustment and the Aprilia's tendency to hunt when riding at anything less than warp speed. In towns and villages, I found myself shifting up the gears to quash the bike's lust for pace. It worked, but it wasn't ideal.

The Aprilia is a very focused machine and that reflects in the firmness of the ride. You can feel everything that's going on beneath the wheels, owing to the stiff chassis and Öhlins suspension. It makes for an uncomfortable experience on bumpy B-roads, but you're rewarded when you reach smoother surfaces. The Tuono is razor sharp in the corners, requiring very little rider input to access impressive angles of lean.

The ride is stable, confidence-inspiring and great fun. Of course, the



Dash isn't the best for tweaking all the modes.

engine really complements the handling characteristics and helps you to forget that the cramped peg position has made the base of your feet go numb, or that your wrists are aching from the forward-slanted riding position. It's certainly no armchair, but it does excel on short and sharp blasts through your favourite twisties.

The longest I rode constantly for was two hours, in which time I'd just about exhausted the bike's 18.5 litre tank, and was ready for a good leg stretch. One thing which is worth noting is a lack of vibration in the bars, pegs or reasonably firm saddle. That did surprise me. On the whole, I really rate the Aprilia. It's not perfect, but when a bike looks, sounds and goes as impressively as this one, you soon learn to forget about all those insignificant niggles.



The Aprilia's tail can be replaced with a supplied pillion unit.

Second opinion

CLIVE WHITE

The Aprilia looked amazing, sounded amazing, but the actual riding experience was quite crude, in my opinion. It's a race bike at heart, so it's a bit of a handful at slower speeds and the backlash it hands out in slow-paced environments is unforgiving.

The throttle felt awkward and the initial pickup was snatchy. When you're hard on the gas, it's a different story; the Aprilia loves being thrashed and it's practically impossible to get the best out of the bike's motor, even with electronics engaged.

I liked how it handled too. You only have to look where you want it to go and the Tuono will be pitching in and reaching for the apex. The Öhlins suspension makes for a pretty firm ride, and the saddle isn't all that kind on your backside, so it would be wrong to crown this bike as being the most comfortable, but if pure power is what you want then it's fantastic.



Pillion's perspective

Running behind this motorcycle is optional. Alternatively you could replace the single unit seat pod with a pillion saddle (which comes as standard when you buy the bike), but unfortunately we didn't get this with our test machine. Gauging things by the size of the minimalist seat unit and the high-mounted footpegs, we figured it probably wouldn't be the most comfortable of experiences.



NO REPLACEMENT FOR **DISPLACEMENT**

A 334bhp V8 built from two R1 motors is a sure way to offer one of the most exclusive motorcycles on the planet...

WORDS: Alan Cathcart PHOTOGRAPHY: Stephen Piper

As New Year's Day messages go, this one took some beating. The email got my attention with just the subject heading: "PGM V8, 334BHP, 2.0 litre V8 Motorcycle!" Attached were three photos of a muscular looking V8 streetfighter, well-finished enough to have plausibly been produced by any major manufacturer, together with a spec sheet that seemed too good to be true.

"I'd like to invite you to be the first person outside our development group to experience the PGM V8 next time you visit Australia," said the message, signed by Paul Maloney – the Aussie race engineer who worked for Harald Eckl's team 10 years ago, and used to build the factory Kawasaki Superbike and MotoGP race engines.



Two months later I rumbled back into Maltec Performance Engineering's HQ in the Victorian Goldfields with a broad smile on my face after a day spent riding the single most impressive piece of multi-cylinder madness I think I've ever had the privilege of sampling. The PGM V8 I'd just spent the day riding was dyno tested to deliver 334bhp at the rear wheel at 12,800rpm, with 158lb-ft of torque at 9500 revs.

Yet it has a clutch light enough to work with a single finger, on a bike that's a pussycat prowling round town at low speeds, before shaking off that disguise in a flash to become the Lion King of the highway once you show it an open road, and work its ride-by wire throttle hard. But just make very, very sure you hold on very, very tight when you do so.

With a 'mere' 242kg kerb weight, fully fuelled with 16.5 litres in the gas tank, the PGM V8 is the closest thing to riding a drag racer on the street I've yet encountered – and that includes my own supercharged Vee Two Super Squalo V-twin once-a-Ducati, which with 'only' 204 bhp at the rear wheel is practically wimpish compared to the PGM V8. Funnily enough – that was made in Australia, too...

RIGHT: The dash should be a benchmark of legibility.

BELOW: Paul built the radiators using Italian curved cores.



AN ANTIPODEAN ACHIEVEMENT

Australia is the can-do country, a nation where problems are opportunities, adversity a challenge, and a glass is always half full. It's a place where people don't wonder IF they can overcome any problems or difficulties, only HOW that can be done. So when 61-year-old expat Paul Maloney decided to return home after 20 years working in Europe's MotoGP and Superbike paddocks to build a V8 streetfighter, he went ahead and did it. "During my time in Europe I spent a lot of time criss-crossing the continent in a truck, and in particular when I was working with [Swedish Superbike champion] Christian Lindholm," said Paul. "It would take us 45 hours of driving to get from Stockholm down to Spain, and nothing ever stopped us apart from tanking up with diesel. I had a lot of time to think, and while we were trundling along the road I came up with the idea for this bike. I'm sure I'd seen Ian Drysdale's V8 at this stage [another product of Melbourne's mechanical free-thinkers, built less than 100km from the PGM HQ], but for a long time I'd had this idea of building a V8 myself, using Yamaha R1 cylinders and heads.

"I first made all the drawings using 750 Kawasaki parts, because the ZX-7RR had separate cylinders, which made the crankcase so much simpler – the early Yamaha R1 had a closed deck cylinder block. So I first drew it up as a 1500cc motor based on two 750 Kawasakis, because I had access to the parts at Harald Eckl's where I was then working. But then right when I was about to start building it, out came the 2004 Yamaha R1 with separate cylinders. So I checked the measurements and even with 2000cc it was going to be no wider, so from that point onwards I was always going to use Yamaha stuff because of my previous 10-year background in Yamaha. But it wasn't till I came back here to Australia from Europe that I could get stuck into it."

It's hard to over-emphasise how thoroughly practical and totally rideable in real-world conditions the PGM V8 is, for apart from its undoubted massive visual presence, you have no inkling of its seemingly limitless performance when you climb aboard, turn on the ignition, fire it up and move off, rejoicing as you do so in the fantastic – no other word for it – song issuing from

"The single most impressive piece of multi-cylinder madness I think I've ever had the privilege of sampling"



the twin separate Akrapovič 4-2-1 exhausts. And that's only at low speeds – get it revving hard and the sound is literally awe-inspiring, both to onlookers and the person fortunate enough to be sitting aboard it. I've ridden several variants of the equally remarkable smaller-capacity Drysdale V8 in both 750cc and 1000cc form, and while the 750 Superbike that raced in Australian endurance events back in the late 90s was also pretty musical, none of the others have delivered the same kind of aural concerto as the PGM V8.

The riding position proved unexpectedly accommodating, too, in spite of the seat having to be positioned above the vertically-mounted rear bank of cylinders. But at 840mm, it's not excessively tall, and neither is the PGM overly wide compared to a normal motorcycle, despite having a Yamaha R1 cylinder head between your knees. And offset slightly to the left, at that.

The riding position has been really well thought out, with carbon fibre protecting your legs from the heat. Okay, it's slightly wider than a conventional bike, but it's not something you're aware of once under way, provided you keep up any kind of momentum. Because of the extra bulk of the V8 motor, it does seem a little ungainly at low speeds, and making a U-turn can be quite fraught if you're not careful, plus at rest I could put just the toes of both feet on the ground at once – at 5ft 10in I'm not excessively short.

That, and the slightly brusque pickup from a closed throttle which is surely just a question of fuel mapping, were the only criticisms I had of a bike which otherwise seems incredibly refined and improbably well developed for the product of a single dedicated engineer and a bunch of mates, working in a small workshop out in the bush. Just amazing.

There's a pleasant visual flow to the carbon fibre seat and tank unit – actually, a shroud hiding the metal fuel tank – and the V8 motor is undeniably handsome-looking, with serious visual presence yet an aura of refinement that's worthy of a mainstream manufacturer. The quality of finish is superlative, well worthy of a motorcycle of this calibre and price level – and in case you wondered, the PGM V8 is indeed ready for production and will be produced to order, in limited numbers, with prices starting at \$180,000 (around £115,000), depending on specification.

ABOVE: Forks are the same as the aftermarket option for Ducati's Diavel.

RIGHT: The carbon fibre shroud atop the rear cylinder protects your leg from heat.

BELOW: Paul Maloney in his Victorian Goldfields-based workshop.



REFINED AGGRESSION

The PGM V8 is extremely easy to ride at what I'll term normal speeds – it's perfectly at home pootling lazily through towns in third gear at 40mph, with no spitting back through the throttle bodies or popping through the exhaust. But show it an open stretch of road and the colossal reserves of performance come swiftly to the fore once you wind the engine up above 5000rpm, as shown on the easy to read and informative dash; why can't they all be as easy to decipher at a glance as this one – especially the big green gear reading next to the large white digital speed icon that's equally legible.

You'll be glad that once you open the taps, for wound up hard its acceleration is phenomenal – nothing else I've ever ridden with lights and a licence plate comes close to matching the effortless sweep of forward motion the V8 delivers at literally the twist of a wrist!

It's not explosive, neither is it aggressive, just completely effortless and totally irresistible, as if it's a force of nature that's pointless to withstand. I have a feeling that few if any of today's MotoGP bikes would be able to keep up with this motorcycle in a straight line, for as the old adage goes, there's no replacement for displacement...

Yet in spite of being so unbelievably fast accelerating, the Aussie V8 is also controllable. It doesn't try to flip you off the back like a similarly mega-torque E-bike will do if you don't treat its throttle with great respect. Paul Maloney had dialled in a 10,500rpm limiter on the digital throttle for my test – the bike was just 1500km from new, remember – rather than the 14,500rpm redline he believes it'll be safe to in due course. But that was more than enough to prove the PGM a landlocked guided missile.



Engineering excess



The crackcases were CAD designed by Paul in conjunction with Clayton Stairmand, chief engineer at a well-established Melbourne-based automotive engineering firm supplying both Ford and Holden.

"Clayton is a bike nut in a car world, with a big interest in motorcycles," says Maloney. "He took on designing the engine out of sheer passion, and had the crankcases sandcast and machined. I toyed with the idea of machining them out of solid aluminium billet, which initially would have been cheaper, but because I'm looking long term to make more units, after you make around 10 pieces sandcasting becomes way more economical."

Next, Paul sourced a one-piece billet crankshaft from Crankshaft Rebuilders in Melbourne, but then had to reverse the gearbox operating mechanism. "We had to turn the gearbox upside down, because with the rearwards-leaning rear bank of cylinders, the clutch couldn't stay in its normal position. We had to change the selector drum and selector forks etc. It was a real nightmare at first, but we got it done okay."

The 40-valve dohc V8 engine is essentially a doubled-up 2006-model four-cylinder Yamaha R1 motor – the latest version that was available when Paul started the project – and retains the same 77 x 54 mm dimensions for a capacity of 1996cc. The two banks of cylinders sit at 90° to each other for perfect primary balance, and the forward-running five-bearing flat-plane crank is fitted with R1 con rods and pistons delivering a 13:1 compression ratio via the pair of unmodified R1 cylinder heads and standard Yamaha R1 camshafts.

"My plan when funds are available is to make another engine based on the 2007-2008 four valves per cylinder R1 motor. I'm extremely confident that I

can get over 400 reliable horsepower from the V8."

In addition to building his own wiring loom and mapping the MoTeC's fuel programme, Maloney also had to map the ride-by-wire digital throttle control: wasn't that a challenge? "No, if you stick at something long enough with half an ounce of common sense, you'll get there eventually," says Paul.

"As it stands now, 98% of the engine mapping came straight off the dyno, apart from a small piece of very low rpm tweaking. The very first engine that we built had the 2004-2006 throttle bodies, which were mechanically operated, and because of the quite compact arrangement inside the Vee we had an absolute nightmare trying to get the linkage to work between the two banks. But then I woke up in the middle of the night and said, 'You idiot, the '07 throttle bodies are ride-by-wire, and they'll fit straight on!'"

The 4-2-1 x 2 titanium exhaust has been custom made for Maloney by Akrapovic, using completely separate systems for the front and the rear cylinders. Maloney made the double stack water radiator himself using curved cores supplied by H2O in Italy, but there's no oil radiator at present, though one is planned for the future.

Maloney designed the modular frame himself – it's a chrome-moly tubular-steel trellis spaceframe attached to rear spars, CNC machined from 7075 aircraft quality aluminium. A fully adjustable 48mm Öhlins inverted fork is the aftermarket replacement for the Ducati Diavel's stock 50mm Marzocchi front end. "The reason we chose this fork is because it's big and fat, and looks nice! Plus it's been proven to suspend a pretty heavy Ducati rather well." A Diavel weighs just 3kg less.

Specification

PGM V8

Price: Approx £115,000

Engine: 1996cc water-cooled dohc 90° V8 four-stroke with flat-plane crankshaft, offset chain camshaft drive, and five valves per cylinder

Power: 334bhp (249kW) @ 12,800rpm (at gearbox)

Torque: 158lb-ft (214Nm) @ 9500rpm (at gearbox)

Fuelling: 8 x Mikuni 45mm throttle bodies, each with single injector and digital/RBW control

Gearbox: 6-speed sequential with gear primary drive

Chassis: Composite frame with chrome-moly tubular-steel trellis spaceframe attached to aluminium rear spars employing the engine as a fully-stressed component

Suspension: (F) Fully adjustable 48mm Öhlins FGRT301 inverted telescopic fork. (R) Fabricated aluminium swingarm with single fully adjustable Öhlins TTX36 Mark 2 shock and bell-crank progressive rate linkage

Brakes: (F) 2 x 320 mm Brembo steel discs with four-piston Brembo GP4 Monobloc radial calipers (R) 1 x 220mm Brembo steel disc with two-piston Brembo P4-34 caliper

Wheels/tyres: (F) 120/70-17 Michelin Pilot Power 3 on 3.5in Marchesini forged aluminium wheel (R) 190/50-17 Michelin Pilot Power 3 on 6in Marchesini forged aluminium wheel

Kerb weight: 242kg

Seat height: 840 mm

Contact:
www.pgmv8.com.au



The flat one-piece handlebar bolted to the tall risers – between which nestles the compact rotary steering damper – gives good leverage, but also delivers a riding position which has you inclined slightly forward to load up the front wheel. This isn't as tiring as I expected it to be, and is certainly a help in countering wheelies.

The rangy 1550mm wheelbase helps here, naturally, without at the same time turning this streetfighter into a truck in the twisties. Okay, it's not exactly a Supersport 600 in the way it goes round turns – but neither is it something you have to manhandle through a sequence of corners. I was pleasantly surprised how much fun the PGM V8 was, and Maloney has used his Superbike setup experience well in dialling in the Öhlins suspension for the bumpy but grippy road surfaces out in the Goldfields.

The Brembo brakes delivered the kind of stopping power you need to haul a 330bhp motorcycle down from the speeds it can deliver. And praise too for the gearbox shift action, which is flawless, in spite of having had to be re-engineered. It's a job done well.

And that applies to the whole PGM V8 package, which after riding it I can say more than lives up to first impressions as a potent package that deserves to find discerning customers around the world with sufficiently healthy bank balances to purchase the world's most exclusive and fastest accelerating customer motorcycle. A VMAX is positively second division by comparison, with a mere 200bhp and 123lb-ft in a bike that's more than 50kg heavier.

Yet in many ways, what's most impressive about the PGM V8 is that this is the product of one man's personal drive and technical inventiveness. Paul Maloney had the vision to single-mindedly conceive the V8 bearing his initials, and to work away in secret for seven long years to create it. But now it's here, it's deeply impressive and ultra-thrilling to ride – and it's absolutely Australian.



RIGHT: It's engineering excess, but the PGM is a job well done.



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*“Dreams are dreams,
but when you wake up,
get a whiteboard and start planning.”*



2moroRider – Rhys Lawrey – talks exclusively to MSL magazine in his most personal interview yet...

WORDS: John Milbank PHOTOGRAPHY: Rhys Lawrey

I'm sat outside a Cambridge pub, having lunch with one of the most inspirational young men I've met. Rhys Lawrey is the holder of two world records – youngest person to circumnavigate the world by motorcycle and most consecutive capital cities visited by motorcycle. In 15 months he covered 56,854 miles, visited 71 countries, six continents and 51 consecutive capital cities (the previous record was five capitals) on Tigger, his Triumph Tiger 800. He started when he was 22, and finished at 24...

MSL: What's your background Rhys?

RHYS LAWREY: We're sitting in it. I didn't go to university... I wanted to travel, because my parents travel. So I thought 'You can travel with hospitality'. I worked in cafés, restaurants, then bars. I got in to bar management, then travelled with bar tending through Australia, New Zealand... offers in the US. I was doing the whole Tom Cruise thing [more than just pouring a pint – it's called 'flaring' – flipping the bottles like in the movie Cocktail].

I was born in England, but grew up in New Zealand, where my birth mum lives. Kevin Sanders is my dad, and Julia Sanders is my stepmum [the adventure experts behind GlobeBusters]. The idea came when I was living in New Zealand, doing all the bar tending... I basically just ended up sitting down having a beer on Skype with the old man, and we were talking about doing a father and son trip, then it just clicked – I thought if I go round the world, why not be the youngest round the world. And he's got two world records, so let's add another so it's two for me as well.

MSL: Why did you choose to raise money for the Prince's Trust?

RL: Because it's for the youth, and I did it as the youngest person. I'm also a strong believer that you can't do everything, but you can do anything. I've talked to people who've said they can't do something because of whatever – sure, things take sacrifice, but you can do it if you really want to. The Prince's Trust gets young people doing things – it doesn't mean they have to study, it doesn't mean they have to go to university – whether it's picking up a saw or a spade or a brush... it makes them go out and do stuff.

I left school because I can't read or write very well. I'm dyslexic – I've never read a book in my life. But this has been a life education that you can't learn about in school. The youth is the future – presidents, doctors, lawyers – but there's also people like me who aren't made for university. I'm very thankful that my parents didn't force normality down my throat – as long as I was paying the bills, they didn't mind.

MSL: How long did it take from the idea to doing it?

RL: About a year. I actually got to a T-junction when I was three months into planning; I was wondering if it was possible, how I'd afford it, how I'd do certain things... I got an offer from an ex-boss who was going to open a bar in Las Vegas. He'd give me a three to five year contract with accommodation for six months. From there I could have got my own house; safe and easy... the norm. I'd have been set for life really. I also had a girlfriend at the time.

But I took a few weeks to think about it, then dropped everything... even the girlfriend. My girlfriend was a Kiwi, and the guy offering me the job was living in New Zealand too, so I just went back to England. That's when I got the whiteboards out and started brainstorming.

It was helpful dad and Julia running GlobeBusters of course, as I could pick their brains on the best way to go at things. Before I knew it, there was a PR team hopping on, sponsors... a snowball effect.

MSL: Was it the GlobeBusters connection with Triumph that put you on a Tiger?

RL: No – at the time dad was associated with BMW. I chose Triumph first because I wanted to make my own name – dad was with BMW, so that's why I did my own sponsorship deals. I am quite a fan of Tom Cruise with all the flaring, and he rides a Triumph... all the celebrities



MAIN IMAGE: Rhys foot tapping at the Hand of the Desert in Northern Chile.

ABOVE: Atop one of the sand dunes of Western China.

RIGHT: Camping out in the Turkmenistan desert.





ride Triumphs – it's the cool brand. Plus I was trying to keep everything British. So English charity, English Metal Mule panniers, English citizen, English motorcycle.

Most people, when they think of their first big trip, they think GS, and I wanted to change that. Whether it's Triumph, Yamaha, other bikes – even small bikes. No one has done a massive continuous trip since back in the 70s – people like Ted Simon... So that's what I went to Triumph with. Several board meetings, and I kept knocking on the door until they finally said 'Right, let's do it'.

It was the right time, as they were planning the 800 and they were wanting more young people on bikes... I knew the right people in PR, and got everything together. Now of course Triumph has taken the bike back, and will be displaying it at shows.

MSL: Will you miss it?

RL: Oh yeah – it's my wife. I really feel like that. I treated her well... some people pop wheelies, and when there's dirt they give it everything. I mean, yeah, every now and then I'd have a bit of fun, but my mentality was always that it wasn't a sprint, but a marathon. I'd got a lot of miles to do, and she'd got a lot of miles to do. I know it's a bit crazy, but I thought 'Okay, she's my wife, I need to look after her'. Most mornings I'd check her over, lube her up, tighten things. The manager of Triumph did say 'I'm afraid I'm going to have to take your girl off you.'

MSL: Did you have any doubts as the trip got closer?

RL: Not at the start – as soon as I said 'I'm doing' it, that was it. There were doubts that Triumph would sponsor me, there were doubts I'd have the funds. But I kept myself positive and sacrificed anything that got in the way. Now I have what I call my student loan; I've got massive debt, credit cards and overdrafts to pay off. I haven't added it all up – I'm too scared to – but I'm sure it's a minimum of £30,000. But then I look at that and think 'Well, my best mate has that in a student loan'. And that makes me feel a bit better.

MSL: When you took on the bike, did you have to work hard to convince Triumph that you'd take care of it? Presumably as it was a new machine they might have been nervous?

RL: Yeah, they said at the start on the very first day 'This is a big risk we're taking.' Now of course they're like



TOP LEFT: Foot-tap with Mt Cook as Backdrop.

TOP RIGHT: Washed out roads at the Carretera Austral in Chile, before the horrific landslides.

ABOVE: Rhys' famous foot-tap in Paris.

'Wahey!' But yeah, it was a big risk, and there was lots of paperwork, documents and meetings. And there were things like looking after the bike, changes in the loan contracts because of course it wasn't going to come back pristine – that was guaranteed! But if the bike stopped then so did I, so I had to have confidence in her. And now I do. Every single time she started without fail.

MSL: Surely something went wrong?

RL: A few plastic bits broke when I was in the landslides in South Chile. It's the most picturesque place, but not in a massive thunderstorm. The mud clearance isn't that big on the 800, so it was all sticking on the front, and broke the plastic frames around the forks. I was having to really give it some to try to make it move, and heard this crunch and thought 'Oh sh*t!', but then realised it was just some plastic so kept going.

There was another plastic bit on the back – again just caused by the rough terrain. The only serious thing was the steering head bearings – they went at about 12,000 miles, but they were really getting a hammering in South China – the main head bolt had come loose. The clutch bearing also needed replacing in Cape Town at about 42,000 miles...

I had six service points in over 56,000 miles – I didn't get it done in Argentina, as they were hard to deal with; I was there in Easter, and they're very Catholic so

everything was shut. I saved it for the South Africans to do instead. I got service in Thailand, New Zealand (that was the big one with valve clearances etc, as it was the halfway mark), Columbia, Chile, South Africa and Greece – that one was just oil and brake pads.

I swear on my life – I'm not saying it because I'm sponsored or anything, but I expected to be there with a hammer and saw at the side of the road. It didn't happen. I went through five rear tyres and four fronts – tubed Continentals, and not one puncture (the tubes are quite durable). I did have the rubber of the tube valve wear out once and let air out – that was the first time I had an issue at the side of the road. I just pumped it up and changed it at the next destination.

I like tubes because you can just carry one to get you out of trouble. I carried a spare front and rear as I had room. You can take the tyres, but they're bulky. And besides – there are dealers everywhere. I was surprised how many Triumph dealers there were. In South East Asia and China there weren't so many, but that was near the start – that's why (along with the weather) I did the journey that way, so as it went on, it'd be easier to get help.

The brake discs never needed changing, and I went through about three pairs of front pads and six rears. Three chains, two sprocket sets – I didn't have a third set at the last change in Amsterdam, and I couldn't afford to buy them, so just used my last chain. I only had 3000 miles to go.

I twice ran out of fuel – once in Argentina. The last station was out, and I didn't remember overtaking a tanker. I thought if I went in sixth gear, 2000 revs, I might just make it. I ended 13 miles shy, so pushed the bike. After about three miles a trucker came, and took me to town.

The other time was after freighting the bike – I thought I'd have enough, but I was 300m short. That was just really frustrating. I reckon I used about 5400 litres of fuel – 294 tanks worth.

MSL: Did you have to top the oil up much?

RL: Not at the start – the first time I had to top up was in Las Vegas. I never carried spare oil until I got to Europe. When you're sitting on a motorway it's at about 5000 to 6000 revs – higher than on a Boxer engine, so the most I burnt was there due to the constant heat. I did about 11,000 miles there, and put about one and a half litres in – by then the bike had done 45,000 miles.

MSL: Did you ever wish for a shaft drive?

RL: No. I'd rather carry a spare chain and keep it lubed – I used a Scottolier which was fantastic. If a shaft fails, that's the trip over. A chain is reassuringly easy to maintain and fix if it does go wrong.



MSL: What was the hardest thing to leave behind?

RL: I missed my friends and family – the hardest thing was being solo. I wouldn't do a solo trip again.

I rode with a guy called Steven Kirk for a couple of months in Central and South America, and the GlobeBuster guys until China, because that's the only way to get there really. It was when I left Stephen though that I realised I really liked having a companion, whether they're riding or on the back. Someone to sit down and have a beer with, someone you've been through the same stuff with. I have hundreds of experiences that only I had. The next trip will never be solo.

Maybe someone in their sixties or something wants to be alone, but for me, young and working in hospitality, being alone was the hardest thing. That's probably why I saw my bike as my wife. Like Tom Hanks and Wilson in Castaway.

Technology definitely helps – there's WiFi almost everywhere so you can get on Facebook easily. That made it easier. But my iPhone broke, which I used a lot – Google translate was really great for silent conversations – people just smiling and laughing as they passed the phone around to read it. Some are really against technology, but I was able to have a laugh – able to communicate with people in China and Mexico. It broke in Chile, just after Steven left, about 30,000 miles in. Trying to communicate then was hard using hand signals and drawings. I just had a sh*tty BlackBerry after that, as I couldn't afford another smartphone. But I got used to trying to communicate. I'm not like other youngsters who sit on their phones all the time.

MSL: Was the kindness of strangers a real thing?

RL: Oh yeah. People are so friendly in every country; to the point that it makes the media disgraceful. Columbia is a good example – it's supposedly led by dangerous drug lords, cocaine on the streets... but you go there and they're the most friendly people. People aren't selling you cocaine on the streets, there's no drug lords – they've all been banished by the military.

That's why I love China too – the big, scary, Communist China. But the first thing I saw when I got there was the customs officers put their hands in the air saying 'Welcome to China'. They come and hug you, they sit on the bike, they take photos at the border, with military towers all around. Super-friendly people.

I think travelling by bike is important, because you look like you've been somewhere and you look like you're going somewhere. Locals don't see you hopping off a bus and taking photos then going again. They instantly know you're different and they break the ice, asking where you've been, where you're going.

BELOW LEFT: Tigger ended up under a hotel owner's Christmas tree one night.

BELOW RIGHT: Pushing the bike after running out of fuel in Argentina.





TOP LEFT: Riding on the West coast in the South Island of New Zealand, Rhys waited for a truck to make tracks to ride in.

TOP RIGHT: Taking a break, looking over the open plains of south China after some fun rough roads.

ABOVE LEFT: Stuck in the sand in Turkmenistan.

ABOVE RIGHT: Chilling out after climbing to the top of one of the old Palenque ruins in Mexico.

That's why I have the map with me. It's incredible.

It's like London – there are scary places there. Something I've learnt on this trip is that people are people; it doesn't matter if they're black, white, Asian or whatever. We're all just trying to put a roof over our heads, food in our bellies, and trying to get some security for our families. Some are doing it with huts and horses, some are doing it with mansions and Ferraris. Some are doing it with culture and religion. It's all exactly the same.

They're not out to get you, unless of course you're looking for trouble. People sometimes ask if I could find food or water, and I just say 'They're humans too – they need to eat and drink'. You just ask a local. Even if you're in the middle of nowhere, somehow a guy on a horse will turn up.

MSL: Did you ever feel uneasy or threatened?

RL: Not really. There were lots of rough places, but I never felt threatened by people – even the military with guns, asking for money. But if they're official, they won't shoot you – it's the civilians that you think more about.

The only real place that I thought I didn't fit in was Masuru in Lesotho, South Africa. I was walking down the street to buy some beers, and I was the only white guy there. You could feel people thinking 'This white boy's lost'. You try to not make yourself look different, you try to blend in. But of course I couldn't.

The Americans always have the big cameras on their chest and look like tourists – you're going to become a target. You don't wear jewellery, you don't show off. I never felt like I was going to get stabbed, but that was the only time I didn't feel like I suited the streets. I walked into the bar and everyone went silent, but I just bought a couple of beers. It's all just business. You don't pull out

wads of cash either – I take out what I need. Always smile – it's the most international language. A smile and the thumbs-up – do that and everyone's happy.

Of course, it's not all peaches and cream, but it's just common sense. If something's going to go wrong it's down to a lack of common sense, or just wrong time, wrong place. Just accept it and move on. You don't leave your bike unlocked – you ask people what the area's like. I always tried to find parking for Tigger as the first thing. Hostels are made for backpackers, so they don't have parking – Europe was hard. In South America I'd park my bike under trees, in the reception, in the restaurant! I'd ask where parking was, and they didn't have any, but they wanted the business, so they'd say 'come up on these steps. Come into my lounge'.

I always thought about the bike first, and then me. If she goes, I can't go anywhere. There were times in Europe that I was running short on cash and couldn't eat, but as long as there was fuel in the bike, I was fine. The worst was in Europe as I got to the end of my funds in Croatia, about two months from the end. I was doing the capital city record, so that was really expensive in Europe. I did over a week with no breakfast or lunch, just a Big Mac at the end of each day. I needed the funds for fuel – as long as she had fuel I could keep going.

MSL: Are there any locations that you really want to revisit?

RL: Oh yeah, a lot of them. Mainly where the prettiest girls were! There's a few I'd skip, like Turkmenistan – that was the worst place I went to. The diplomats, the officials... it's one of the top-producing oil countries, selling it to Russia. They're the closest thing to the ex-Soviet countries. They're second to North Korea in dictatorship, and openly hate tourists. The locals are



nice, but it's the officials, the whack-job who runs the country and spends all the money on the capital – Ashgabat. The rest of the country looks like a war zone. The grooves in the roads caused by the trucks are 6in deep – when you get in one you're trapped. Like Tarmac ruts. Then to the right you've got a foot high of loose gravel.

Ashgabat is like Disneyland; the president [Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow] lives there, so he makes every building white marble or gold. Five-storey buildings with nobody living in them. You're not allowed to take photos on the streets; we even got told off by the military police for putting our helmets on the seats. One guy got told off for not sitting upright! We had three nights in Ashgabat – far too many – and got a phone call at one point saying we weren't allowed to ride our bikes the next day.

The poor locals aren't allowed passports without permission – they're like prisoners. I remember talking to a receptionist about it, comparing it to Hitler's dictatorship. I remember her really well. She was quite nice too.

Turkmenistan has the quietest borders because nobody wants to go inside them. But it's a country to see, because it makes you appreciate the freedom we have. That was where I started to realise that the officials might have their guns, but they wouldn't shoot – it'd start a war. I realised all they could do was tell you off, and I think it's better to ask for forgiveness than ask for permission, so took pictures and videos first!

Getting in took all night – we arrived at seven in the evening, and got out at eight in the morning. They don't want tourists; they don't have computers, they just have big books. There were 15 windows – you'd go to window nine and get a stamp, then you'd get sent to window 10.

Then you'd go to window two, and he wanted a dollar for another bit of paper. Then it was off to window six in building two, but he was asleep...

MSL: What is the biggest hardship of something like this?

RL: It depends on the person – if someone has lots of money, that won't be an issue, but it was for me. The common thing though is being exposed, out in the wild, exposed to life, death... the amount of death I've seen – animals, the aftermath of crashes. I was 10 minutes from a crash and found a cyclist and a scooterist under a truck. You're hearing mums screaming... you get exposed to life. With that comes the challenges of how you mentally and emotionally handle it.

Then there's the riding challenges, like the landslides in Chile – you simply have to get your bike through. That was one of the hardest days of the whole trip – I stupidly didn't see the weather report, and it was the first time I ever thought 'what the hell am I doing... mum, I want to go home'. It was rough terrain, floods, a cliff drop, mud... then another mountain just collapsed. There were three cars stuck, I was covered in mud, and I couldn't do anything. You just force yourself to keep going, but I had to stop. I was just there in the pouring rain, watching a car spinning its wheels, stuck in a ditch. I couldn't turn around as I'd run out of fuel. The only way I could go was forward, up the hill. That was when I wanted to go home.

But that evening was one of the best I had. I got into a village about 11pm, found a guest house, knocked on the door covered head to toe in mud, and an old lady answered. The bike went in the woodshed, I had a lovely warm shower, she slaughtered a chicken right in front of me and I had chicken and chips with her in front of her little wood fire.

ABOVE: Rhys in Dunhuang, China – this is what makes a real selfie!



ABOVE: The roads in China aren't always the best.

ABOVE RIGHT: Outside a stunning Chinese monastery.



MSL: Is there one message you really want to get across?

RL: I say to people 'Do what you want to do, not what your partner says, not what society or the government says.' People say 'I can't do this because of my wife' but I say 'Look mate, if your wife doesn't let you do the things you want to do, then you're in the wrong relationship.'

You only live once – dad's 55 now, and retirement's in his view. Time flies by, so when I die, I don't want to be all safe and bubble-wrapped. I want to be sliding into the graveyard, all cuts and bruises, smacking in hard saying 'That was one hell of a ride'.

Plan your dreams, and then achieve them. Dreams are dreams, but when you wake up, get a whiteboard and start planning.

That's why I do that signature jump – the foot-tap jump – people get excited by that, but the hidden message behind it is that if you want to do something – like a bungee jump – you'll get to a point in life where you reach a platform. You get to the edge and have to jump, but you have the choice to turn back. It's like the T-junction I reached. Things may not be 100%, you may

not be totally sure, but you get to that platform and I say to people just jump. Hope like hell it works out. If it doesn't you'll land in the water, end up on some island, then you'll pick yourself up and brush yourself off, and you'll learn from it. Just get up there and jump.

MSL: What's next?

RL: My next 2moroRider project will be with Triumph – they did so much that they deserve to be out there more, so I want to be their brand ambassador. I also want to get more young people into motorcycles. I'll probably be running a YouTube series, teaching my mate who's not got a licence how to ride, how to plan a trip, get visas for a two or three month adventure. It's to show how I can take young people and get them on two wheels.

I'm also going to do a bit for GlobeBusters, but other than that, I'll be looking for some part time bar work to pay off my debts. I couldn't go back to full time work, and I need the time for these other projects. Then I'll go somewhere again. I do have a few ideas for some other records...

MSL: What did it feel like when you finished in London?

RL: As I got closer I made myself think about each day, then it got to thinking about each hour. When I saw Big Ben it was like hitting a brick wall. I saw the major, my dad, all the cameras... I just burst into tears. I'm not a guy for that, but it's the first time I've emotionally broken down. As soon as I hugged dad, he was like 'I'm proud of you son', and that's where I really burst into tears.

It was very, very emotional. I didn't know what to think – that first evening I went to a pub to meet up with sponsors, but my mind was all over the place. My life had been in three boxes for a year. It was overwhelming. I was absolutely exhausted. I just sat there and couldn't say much. It will go down as one of the best days of my life, probably alongside marriage and kids – if that happens – and one of the most emotional days.

I was honoured to have met Rhys. As I settled the bill he leaned in conspiratorially; "The most beautiful women in the world – they're definitely Columbians."

I left him chatting to the bar maid, asking about an ad in the window calling for experienced bar staff...

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Accidents of history



Kevin Cameron

The incredibly inventive Frederick Lanchester attended the Paris Expo of 1889 and saw a Benz internal combustion engine. Soon he was making his own, with purely rational features. In 1896 or 7, he built a car with an opposed-piston engine having two crankshafts and six connecting rods, the purpose of which was to cancel all vibration. Lanchester was not a man for half-measures.

One who saw the car and perhaps marveled at its smoothness was Bristol man Joseph Barter; "I said to myself 'I could make one like that' and I came back home and built an engine in my bedroom."

He showed his own single-cylinder engine at the 1903 Crystal Palace show. Two years later he built a simplified version of Lanchester's opposed twin; as its pistons move always in opposite directions, primary balance is good. Its 6lb flywheel was external. In 1905 Walter Moore (who would later so famously design Norton's ohc racing engine) put a Barter 200cc opposed-twin into a bicycle frame. This engine was simultaneous-firing but later examples fired every 360°.

Barter had used the Douglas Brothers Foundry of Bristol to make castings for his engines, so when in 1906 Barter's Light Motors, Ltd became insolvent, Douglas Brothers bought it and Barter became works manager. In 1910 they added a two-speed gearbox, and displacement was increased to 340cc. Although the early engines had suction-operated intake valves, mechanically-operated intakes were soon adopted.

In 1913 Douglas experimented with overhead valves and Billy Newsome came a close second in the Junior TT.

In the Kaiser War, Douglas expanded production to build some 25,000 military motorcycles. It is said that on Armistice night, Granville Bradshaw sketched his very similar ABC flat twin on the back of an envelope.

German industry contracted sharply following the war. BMW, whose 3500 employees had produced thousands of water-cooled inline six aero engines for German combat aircraft, had dwindled into a job-shop.

In 1922 the Gustav Otto factory contracted for BMW to build a four-stroke motorcycle engine. It was mainly the work of Martin Stolle, who happened to own a Douglas motorcycle. His design was the side-valve M2B15 opposed-piston external flywheel 500 of 68 x 68mm (494cc). Some go so far as to say M2B15 was reverse-engineered from the Douglas.

For testing, it was put into the Douglas chassis. As the resulting 'Helios' motorcycle entered production, BMW manager Franz Joseph Popp noted its generally

Motorcycle history is a pinball game of bicycles, aeroplanes and war...

unsatisfactory design, and asked staff aero engine designer Max Friz to draw something better. Friz had basically no use for mere surface vehicles and had to be persuaded to do the work by promise of a coal stove and a supply of fuel, to be installed in the guest room of his house. Times were hard in postwar Germany.

Friz, possibly in some consultation with Stolle, had drawings ready in December 1922. Friz's aero experience is evident in his having turned the engine at 90° to Walter Moore's cylinders fore-and-aft arrangement. With its finned cylinders thus equally presented to cooling air – one on either side – it resembled many small flat-twin aircraft engines then in design or production. Engine and gearbox were fully enclosed and bolted into an oil-tight unit. Barter's external flywheel, now enclosed, bore a clutch. With its shaft drive, this R32 machine rivaled autos for clean, quiet convenience. There was no exposed machinery requiring oil-can lubrication.

Douglas, meanwhile, pioneered overhead valves in advance of most other British producers. Three seasons of solid development brought success; Tom Sheard's 1923 win in the Senior TT.

Somehow Douglas failed to carry on as it had begun. Although its bike, being a twin, could rev higher than singles of its day, the indifferent cooling of its cylinders became a greater and greater handicap as power increased. Douglas had a last competition hurrah when the Australian sport of dirt-track hit England in 1928; with its low build and dirt-track's easier duty cycle, Douglas again won races. But after just three years of Douglas dominance, first Rudge and then JAP took over.

BMW, meanwhile, had a nice little sideline in motorcycles. In October of 1923, Rudolph Schleicher joined BMW straight from university. He designed a fully enclosed ohv system with aluminium cylinder heads – the first BMW motorcycle engine with the distinctive oval rocker covers. In 1924 Schleicher became chief engineer at BMW motorcycle, and Max Friz returned to aero engine work, in charge of development of the V12 BMW VI.

A BMW works team tackled the TT in 1937 and won the Senior in 1939. The winning engines of Georg Meier and Tom Sheard shared a common ancestry.

How it is to trace out the trajectory of history's pinball game. Ideas arise, are taken up by proponents in different places, they rise or fall, and their legacy remains with us.

Who is Cameron?

Kevin is one of the most widely-respected technical gurus on the planet. Author of some of the most iconic and landmark books in motorcycle publishing, the American brings the innermost workings of what goes on in an engine to the fore in an easy-to-access way. Simply put, Cameron is a genius of all things metal that are fixed to two wheels

TOURING

Your rides ♦ Our rides ♦ Tips and tricks

Waves across the world

Three Aussies are riding 250cc trail bikes from home to Ireland...

Three surfer dudes from Australia – Johnny, Dan and Shaun – set off from Buderim, Queensland

in March 2015, and are aiming to hit Dublin later this year. They're making the 23,000 mile trip to raise money and awareness for charity Waves for Water.

The original plan was to use postie bikes – the Honda CT110 step-throughs ubiquitous in Australia, and which a few brave souls really have used for big trips; Brit Nathan Millward rode from Australia back to the UK – we recommend his book *The Long Ride Home*. This latest group call themselves Twenty



The first leg of the adventure; riding the Australian outback.



This was the boat the lads took to Malaysia...

One Horses, this being the combined power of three posties.

But a shakedown trip through the outback convinced them that relying on 7bhp apiece wasn't such a good idea. "On a postie bike," they wrote later, "the difference between a good headwind and a good tailwind is the difference between spending a day doing 60kph or 90kph."

So they bought three 250 trailies instead; a Yamaha TTR250, a WR250 and a Kawasaki Sherpa. After riding through the outback, including a final 500-mile day to reach Adelaide, the bikes were flown to Bali. The boys seem willing to put in long days, riding 200 miles up into the Javan jungle in their first day back on the road, then another 500-mile epic to Jakarta.

The pace slowed in Indonesia where bikes and scooters aren't allowed to use the motorways, but the 250 choice appeared to be the right one: "Indonesian roads

are difficult at the best of times, but the 250s have proven themselves – enough power to get you out of trouble, not enough to get you into it. There were a handful of times when I wanted more power, but none when I needed it."

They caught a ro-ro ferry, and enjoyed good roads through Sumatra before negotiating another boat (much smaller, timber-built and with the bikes lashed on deck) over to Malaysia. The Sherpa sputtered in heavy downpours, but a piece of scrap plastic wedged in to shield the electrics cured that. More worrying were the metal shards found in the TTR's oil filter – new camchain needed. Thai roads were good, but Vietnam has a 25mph speed limit for bikes, where cars can barrel along at twice that speed.

They made it out of South East Asia into India, and as we go to press were continuing to head west.

Waves for Water

Waves for Water is a charity working to provide clean water for those who need it. Millions of people all over the world don't have access to safe, clean water for drinking, cooking or medical needs. Waves for Water provides cheap, portable water filters which do the trick. Current work in Nepal after the earthquake is doing this for 250,000 people. A good reason for riding across the world.
www.wavesforwater.org



Breakdown repairs in India.



The 250s have proved a good choice of machine so far.

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INTO THE SHIRES

Ride through four English counties in half a day – Essex, Herts, Cambs and Beds.

WORDS AND PICTURES: Norman Crossley

ABOVE: The open road beckons, eh Norman?

This ride will surprise and delight, as there's something for everyone, whether you're a speed buff out for a fast blast or a jog-along biker. What's more, there are some stunning vistas in what is a pretty flat landscape, with beautiful wide-open skies and views to the far horizon.

It takes in pretty villages and roads which, in this pot-holed age, are remarkable for their smoothness. Most are minor, but you'll be surprised by the number of fast straights and sweeping bends. Because of the rural nature of the ride, most of them aren't even B-roads, but it's all pretty straightforward to follow.

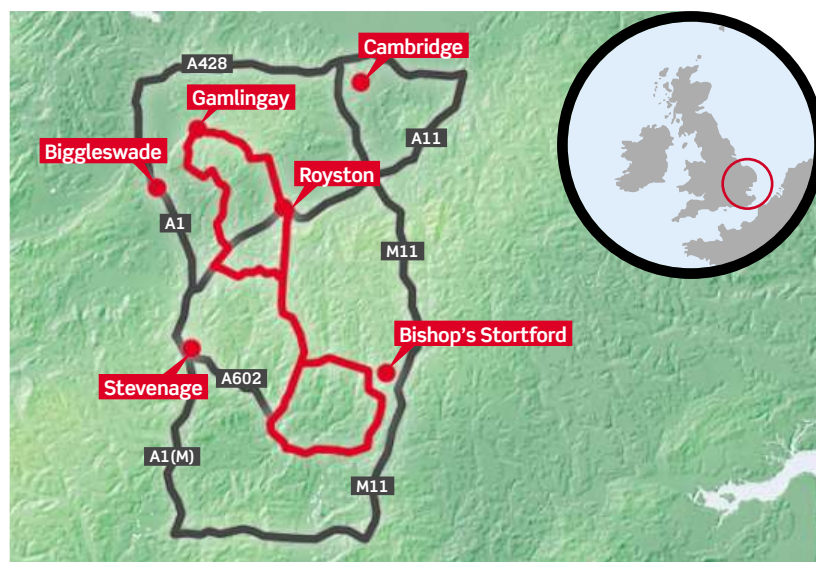
From Old Harlow, head north on the A1184 through Sawbridgeworth, then half a mile beyond the lights take a left on the unclassified road to Much Hadham and Green Tye – it's very quiet, and a chance to really press on along the open straights. Another couple of miles on, turn left at the crossroads for Green Tye, then left at the church and pootle through Perry Green.

The church's graveyard is the resting place of sculptor Henry Moore and his wife Irina, and in the village have a stop (I know it's early) at the Henry Moore Foundation gardens – all his sculptures are on display, and it's open to the public. Watch out for the giant Moore bronze in a field, a mile up the road.

Back on the bike, turn right on the B1004 through Much Hadham, then just as you leave the village take a left onto another unmarked road to Sandon. It's a pretty little village, but then you quickly turn left onto the A120 for a mile or so. At the big roundabout, go right onto the A10 for Cambridge, and press on for three miles to the unclassified road to Sandon.

If you're ready for a cuppa (well it is thirsty work), come off the A10 early for Westmill and its tea shop – if that's full, carry on to the small town of Buntingford, full of independent shops and cafes. Afterwards, it's easy to find your way back to the A10, where you turn left then immediately right onto the road to Sandon.

At Sandon, bear right at the junction, signed Royston, and enjoy a really great fast stretch all the way down to the A505. Left here, then after just half a mile turn right for Ashwell. You're now into the beautiful chalklands of the district, sweeping vistas opening up all the time. The quietness of these roads is wonderful, and the surfaces are great in comparison with the horrors of most roads further south.



Henry Moore's simple grave contrasts with his avant-garde sculptures.



Stop off in Ashwell if you have the time – the church is worth a visit; a huge edifice that commands attention from approaches miles away. Turn right at the next T-junction and carry on through Ashwell, then left into Station Road (just past the cricket pitch) then right on the Guilden Morden road.

From here on, the tarmac is fantastic for miles – fast and inviting as we leave Hertfordshire, dip into Beds before crossing into Cambridgeshire, all within a few miles. Head straight over the crossroads with the B1042, then at the bottom of the hill turn right on the Hatley road, which gives a little detour through open countryside, passing an ancient sign for Cockayne and Hatley by the roadside. Climb to the imposing water tower, then a fast downhill to turn right on the B1040 Gamlingay road.

There isn't much to see here (apologies to all Gamlingay residents) so filter right just before town, signed Hatley and Croydon, then right again after a few hundred yards, signed to the same places. This is another great stretch of open road, through the little hamlet of Hatley St George, with its open parkland estate and ancient church, before several miles of press-on opportunity to a T-junction with the B1042.

Left here, and another blast all the way to the roundabout at the A1198; the Old North Road. Turn right here, and after another couple of miles you hit the A505 at a roundabout. Turn left and follow signs for Royston, including a stretch of A10.

At the risk of upsetting more local residents, I have to say that modern day Royston doesn't have a lot to recommend it scenically. However, it is an ancient seat of



FAR LEFT: Very nice, but we're told they're not so hot on lean angles.

LEFT: Norman manages to perch his K1200 on a bench while balancing on one footpeg – an incredible feat.

kings, hence the name. James VI of Scotland, on his way to become James I of England (yes, it is confusing) dallied here, and liked it so much he made it his leisure locale, setting up residence for all his future hunting activities. As royals used to do, he forbade any hunting of game within a 16 mile radius, as he wanted it all for himself. Royston is also famous for having its own bank, which eventually merged with Barclays; should have stayed independent...

If you're now short of time, you can just blast straight back down the A10, but it's far more interesting to look for the B1039 to Barkway out of Royston – it's a lovely little detour and a great stretch of road. In Barkway, turn right at the T-junction onto the B1368 and carry on through several villages before rejoining the A10, where you take a left at the roundabout. Then it's fast and open dual-carriageway until the Harlow turn-off and back on the A414.

So that's it, about 86 miles in all – say three hours plus any time spent sipping tea or gazing at Henry Moore sculptures or local views (or maybe all at the same time). And how many other rides can you devise which travel through four counties in the space of three hours?

BELOW: You don't need the Mid West for big skies and distant horizons.



Write about your adventure

You don't need to be a professional journalist or photographer, just give a sense of where you've been and why other MSL readers might enjoy the same trip.

We're looking for the following: Day Ride – favourite day or half-day ride local to you – (1000 words); Mid Ride – a week or two in Europe (1400 words); Big Ride – anything more adventurous or further afield – (1800 words).

We'll need a selection of good, high-resolution pictures – at least 1Mb each. When your story is published, you'll receive a free 12-month subscription to MSL. Submissions or questions to: msltravel@yahoo.co.uk



Ashwell Church is tucked away but worth a stop.

From here, those white lines look like a good idea...

ALP TO THE ALPS

What else can you cross the French Alps on but a 700cc Honda with the right sort of name?

WORDS AND PICTURES: Dai Davies

We didn't rush down to the French Alps, and in fact it was 12 days after leaving Kent that we finally reached them. We had the luxury of a month away, so we were able to follow a leisurely route down

through northern France, stopping to admire the scenery in the Champagne and the Jura and explore towns like Laon and Besançon.

The plan was to head south over the mountains, down through the Alpes Maritimes to the Med then back again, taking in plenty of cols on the way and hoping that our Transalp would live up to its name.

Col de Madeleine was our first objective; 16 miles long and with 30 hairpins, it's a great mountain pass, quite narrow and steep with one or two tiny settlements perched on slopes that seem impossible to build on. We had the whole pass to ourselves, except for the many cyclists emulating their favourite Tour de France heroes.

The route down was equally good and eventually brought us to the town of St Jean de Maurienne where we found the road up to Col de la Croix de Fer, another great pass with a series of tight switchbacks taking us to the summit at 2068m. The Col de Glandon followed, and a precipitous descent took us to the village of Allemond where we camped, though only for the second time in the trip so far.

Next day we were heading for Alpe d'Huez and I was looking forward to tackling the 21 hairpins to the summit, but with heavy, slow-moving traffic it was a





disappointment, though the much quieter descent made up for it.

At Grenoble we picked up Route Napoleon – the N85 – which carves a sinuous route through the foothills of the Alps as far as Gap. Then it was on the N94 for Digne, and to the Serre-Poncon lake. This was an amazing turquoise, with a very impressive bridge crossing it to the town of Savines le Lac where we turned right onto the N100, which skirted the southern shore of the lake. All fine biking roads, but when we finally made it to Digne, the temperature (already sweltering in Gap) was still hovering in the 30s.

GORGE YOURSELF

We were being spoilt by excellent roads, and Route Napoleon, twisting and undulating along the valley of the Asse, was the best of the trip so far. But Castellane was heaving with traffic and people, so after a short stop we headed straight for the Grand Canyon du Verdon.

This was more like it – a canyon of spectacular proportions, the river occupying a narrow strip at the bottom and a vertical rock cliff soaring up above us. The narrow road twisted this way and that following the river – sometimes under rocky overhangs, sometimes through tunnels blasted in the rock – often too narrow for cars to pass and busy with ramblers, cyclists, cars, motorhomes and even coaches.

The route starts off at river level but gradually gains height until it bursts out of the gorge, with the river about a thousand feet below. That's when the gorgeous Lac de Sainte-Croix comes into view, and the canoes and rafts that have been white watering burst out of the gorge onto its serene waters.



ABOVE: Gorge en route from Besancon to Pontarlier.

TOP RIGHT: Another day, another col.

RIGHT: Now this is what you call canyon carving – the Grand Canyon de Verdon, if you want to be exact.



That night we camped at Draguignan, which is the French equivalent of Salisbury Plain, a vast military training area. We survived that, and being less than 20 miles from the Med, had to see the sea, so ended up in the youth hostel at Frejus, spending an expensive day hiding under an umbrella on the beach.

From here, we were heading home, but we still wanted to cross as many cols as possible, so headed up back-roads to Grasse and past some serious tailbacks before rejoining the Route Napoleon, now numbered N6085.

BELOW LEFT: Did you watch the Tour de France coverage? You might recognise this.

BELOW RIGHT: Gorge du Var.





This was the road at its best – sweeping curves, long straights and a great surface. The scenery was fine too with forested hills as far as the eye could see. But the icing on the cake was the lack of other traffic, which meant we could really press on again. This time we didn't stop but took a right towards the Barrage de Castillon and the valley of the Var.

But this wasn't the highlight of the tour. In the valley, the river we'd followed for some distance now funnelled into a narrow gorge while the road skirted the side of a vertical cliff. The reddish brown rock forming the gorge was devoid of vegetation; quite stark and stunning. Then came nine tunnels in quick succession, with the stretches in between livened up by the valley side dropping down vertically to the river far below, and only a low wall separating us from open air.

After the village of Guillaume, the highlight somehow got better. We followed the headwaters of the Var until the road started to climb. It was quite narrow – just wide enough to pass an oncoming car – and the surface was poor, especially along the edge, but the switchback turns were fabulous.



ABOVE LEFT: Route des Alpes was built by Alpine troops, according to this.

ABOVE RIGHT: A group of Vespas from Italy were col bagging too.

RIGHT: The Davies were celebrating their 40th wedding anniversary – can you think of a better way?



What gave it that extra frisson of excitement was the remoteness of it all. In the 20-odd miles from Guillaume we'd seen two tiny hamlets, then no other sign of habitation and no human beings. The summit finally arrived at 2327m, our highest so far, while Mt Pelat towered above us at over 3000m.

We started down. It wasn't as steep as the way up but loose chippings, the narrowness of the road and the lack of any sort of barrier between us and the steep slope all made it a bit fraught. At the bottom, the road hugged the riverside and we made good progress to the town of Barcelonnette, having covered 160 miles of the most amazing roads and scenery.

Col de Vars and Col d'Izoard came next day, the latter with a sight that we would not forget. The mountain ridge had been weathered to such an extent that the scree slope stretched across for a good kilometre – a smooth, steeply sloping surface of sand-like material in pinkish grey, down to the road and beyond, with pinnacles of rock sticking up through it like giant stumps. It looked like something you'd see in a desert and is aptly named Casse Deserte. Mind blowing.

We bagged Col du Galibier next day; another scary one with a narrow, rough road leading to the top, more vertiginous drops to our right and no barrier between us and oblivion. After a traffic light-controlled tunnel, we turned right for the final road to the summit, which had been recently resurfaced but was even narrower and steeper. I prayed that a car would not meet us, and luckily none did. Mind you, the view from the top, at 2462m, was superb.

There were many more cols on the route home, with a diversion through Italy and Switzerland, where we camped at the foot of the Eiger for four days. Back home, I made it over 2700 miles and up (and down) 25 cols. I reckon the Transalps had lived up to its name.



ABOVE: Look Mrs D, we know you didn't cycle up here.



LEFT: Heather salutes the black soldiers who fought for France during the Second World War.

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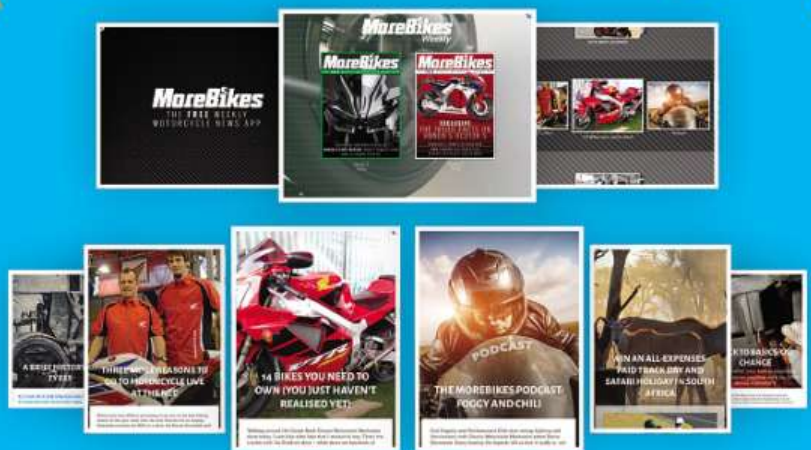
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KIWI WINTER

A British winter is on the horizon... Chris Finch and friends fled to New Zealand to hire Triumph Explorers.

WORDS AND PICTURES: Chris Finch



ABOVE: Stunning is an overused word for views, but what else describes this one from Te Mata?

Dee and I have been lucky enough to ride motorcycles across much of Western Europe, south-west India, Thailand, parts of Australia and a three-and-a-half-month, 11,500-mile tour across Canada and the USA – we made it 27 countries on five continents. So was there anywhere left to go?

Of course there was. Together with long-term riding buddies Martin and Fay, we chose New Zealand – majestic scenery, deserted roads, summer weather and friendly people. We had in mind a three-week self-

BELOW: Ready for the off – two fuelled-up and luggage-laden Explorers.



guided trip around both North and South Islands, and the easiest way to organise it was to contact H-C Travel.

I gave them our intended itinerary and the fact that we wanted to hire Triumph Explorers, and left them to get on with arranging the flights, bike hire and accommodation. In the meantime, armed with a good 1:800,000 map, Google Maps and a guidebook, I spent a few happy evenings planning a route.

We flew out of Heathrow on Christmas Eve and arrived in Auckland early on Boxing Day after nearly 24 hours of almost nonstop flying. After a day of sight-seeing, we picked up the Triumphs and set off northwards to the Bay of Islands. Avoiding main roads, we took the more scenic route up the west coast of North Island to Helenville, and then inland to the small settlement of Te Hana, where we turned east on the Mangawhai Road.

This superbly surfaced but almost empty road twists and turns for 30 miles to Mangawhai Heads and Lang's Beach over on the east coast. The space and freedom were a tonic after enduring 24 hours in economy class...

During a free day at the Bay of Islands, we caught a ferry across to the quiet colonial town of Russell. In whaling days, this calm haven used to be known as, 'The hellhole of the Pacific,' but today Russell is a quiet, picturesque settlement, home of New Zealand's oldest surviving church, which was built in 1835. On Flagstaff Hill, up behind the town, is a flagpole erected in the same position as the four that Hone Heke, the great Maori leader, cut down in protest over the treatment of his people after the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi. The views across the Bay of Plenty from there are absolutely stunning.



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VOLCANIC ROAD

It was time to head southwards, so we headed due west (it does make sense) across North Island to meet the sea at Hokianga Harbour, before turning south on a fabulous winding road through the Waipoua Forest, where there is sanctuary for the nation's largest tree, a truly remarkable Kauri. Some 75 miles south, at Matakohe, we stopped at the Kauri Pioneer Museum. This is a huge collection of everything to do with the harvesting and logging of Kauri trees in the late 19th and early 20th century and the people who did it.

We crossed the Auckland Harbour Bridge and made our way south-east around Kawakawa Bay and along the Seabird Coast with its ancient shellbanks around Miranda and Kaiaua, where the harvesting of mussels and cockles is an important local industry. The Pacific Coast Highway then took us east to Kopu on a lovely twisting route across the Coromandel Ranges and then south-west to Rotorua.

No visit to Rotorua would be complete without attending a Hangi, a traditional Maori style of cooking which uses heated rocks and steam to cook the food while it is buried beneath the ground. While there, we also visited the Whakarewarewa Thermal Village to see the Pohutu Geyser and the hot pools. It's clear that the New Zealand tourist board takes tourists seriously, with

ABOVE: Lang's Beach on the road to Paihia.



one road named the Thermal Explorer Highway. Well signposted, it takes you from Hawkes Bay right past many of the North Island's volcanic features – crystal clear lakes, spouting geysers and bubbling mud pools.

At Lake Taupo there are stunning views across the water to Mount Ruapehu, and from there we rode across the rough hill country of the Ahimanawa Range, where the road rises to over 700m over the Titokura Saddle before dropping down to the Esk River estuary near Napier. South of Napier, at Hastings, we took a detour to ride to the top of Te Mata Peak from where, at 399m, there was a spectacular view across Hastings and the surrounding countryside.

From Hawkes Bay to Wellington we had the option of keeping east of the Tararua Range, through farmland, or we could cross over the mountains and take the road along the western side of the range, close to the west coast and the Tasman Sea. Those magical words, 'or we

BOTTOM LEFT: View from Flagstaff Hill at Russell, Bay of Islands.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Three weeks in a New Zealand summer, wouldn't you be smiling? From left: Martin, Fay, Chris and Dee.





could cross over the mountains,' made it no contest. There are three routes to choose from, and we opted for the most southerly on the Pahiatua Track. At 18 miles, it's the longest of the three and provides a twisting, undulating ride with panoramic views to the west from the summit. From the western end of the Pahiatua Track, it was an easy 100-mile ride down through Levin to Wellington.

However, just before reaching NZ's capital we took a detour off Hwy 1 at the small seaside town of Paekakariki, onto Paekakariki Hill Road. This is a narrow but fabulous biking road, cut into the hillsides along a valley, with an absolutely magnificent series of bends for the whole of its 10-mile length. It was late December, and we were riding in hot sunshine at the peak of the New Zealand summer.

HAVE A BMW...

When the bike hire company contacts you mid-ride, it can be bad news, but this time it was a bonus. It turned out a customer had lost the keys and abandoned his hired BMW F700GS in a hotel car park at Motueka on South Island. Alert to the fact that Dee had a bike licence, they asked whether she would be prepared to pick up the bike and ride it for a couple of days until they could collect it from us. Dee was already missing her own bike, so must have hesitated for all of a nano-second before grabbing the opportunity.

First we had to cross over to South Island, which involved a ferry crossing of over three hours (I know, they look closer than that on the map) to land at Picton before riding the fabulous yet deserted Queen Charlotte Drive for 20 miles as it climbed, twisted and plunged around the northern coastline to Linkwater and then across to Havelock. From there, the road cut across the Bryant Range, through the Rai Valley and over Whangamoa Saddle, to meet the coast at Tasman Bay,



ABOVE LEFT: Riding through a rainforest (almost) – Waipoua Forest on the west coast of North Island.

ABOVE: Hot pools and geysers at Rotorua.



RIGHT: Now that's what you call white water – Huka Falls, near Lake Taupo.

just north of Nelson, New Zealand's sunniest city. Passing through the small, busy town of Motueka, close to Nelson, Dee spotted a red BMW F700GS parked all by itself in a hotel car park... It was indeed the orphan bike we had to take care of. The hire company had a spare set of keys couriered down, and next day we headed back up to pick up the GS. Now a convoy of three bikes, we headed south along the Motueka Valley Highway to Kohatu, where we rode past apple orchards and fields of hops and tobacco. Dee was quickly getting to grips with the BMW and clearly enjoying the ride.

At Murchison we refuelled and rode through the Buller Gorge where the road, often far above the river, hugs the side of the deep canyon. In places, where the road has been cut into the canyon wall – literally canyon carving – the rock overhangs the tarmac like a roof. It's a

BELOW LEFT: Road over Te Mata Peak, and that piece of four by two may or may not stop you falling over the edge.

BELOW: Queen Charlotte's Drive hugs the cliffs and inlets between Picton and Nelson.





spectacular and memorable ride along this way to Westport. From there we carried on south along the spectacular west coast on Highway 6, which easily rivals California's Big Sur for both scenery and sheer riding pleasure.

We stopped overnight on the small deserted beach at Punakaiki, near to Pancake Rocks. These are layered like stacks of thin pancakes and in places form huge columns which have been chiselled by rain and sea into curious stacks, ridges and chasms. They are at their most impressive at high tide, when big waves rolling off the Tasman Sea surge up into the eroded undercut cavities and erupt like booming geysers through the chimney-like fissures. It's quite a sight.

It was time to hand over our rescued BMW – to Dee's disappointment – and back on the Explorers we headed south to Hokitika before diverting inland to the Hokitika River Gorge. Then the road deteriorated into a gravel track, with no sign of a river or a gorge. If in doubt, get off the bikes and have a look round, and sure enough, after a short walk, a vista unfolded to reveal a glacial blue river flowing through a magnificent granite gorge. It was lined with beautiful native bush and boasted a swing footbridge across, for those who dared.

Back on the bikes, we carried on south, through the old gold mine town of Ross, to Franz Josef Glacier. The road climbed up over the mountains, a job itself as the land rises very steeply because these 3000m peaks are less than 20 miles from the sea. We enjoyed a good scratch all the way up, over the top and down the other side, to our night stop at the town of Fox Glacier.

From here, we really were in mountainous country, and not for nothing are the peaky bits named New Zealand's Southern Alps. We headed along their western side to the coast at Bruce's Bay, where the road heads through the Paringa Forest and then along wild coastline before turning inland at Haast Junction.

Here it crosses the River Haast via a single lane bridge which, at more than 700m long, is the longest in the country. It's only 3.7m wide and has two sets of passing bays part way – just hope you don't meet something halfway between the bays and the end of the bridge.

ABOVE: Orphan BMW joined them for a couple of days.

TOP RIGHT: Shady coffee stop at Kohatu.

RIGHT: Pancake Rocks look as if you could slice off a top layer and take it home.



Into Mount Aspiring National Park, the road climbs from sea level up to the bridge across the Gates of Haast Falls, past Fantail Creek Falls and on to The Haast Pass, at the saddle between the valleys of the Haast and Makarora Rivers, and over 500m above sea level. From here, the road descends along the western side of the Young Range to the eastern shore of Lake Wanaka. Part-way along, it jinks east and runs down the south-western shore of Lake Hawea.

We rode on through the town of Wanaka to find the old Cardrona Hotel which was built in the 1860s gold rush. You can't miss it – an atmospheric old wooden building, with matching telegraph office next door and an old wooden general store across the road. Other than that, there was little else remaining of this once prosperous town. The Gold Rush was long gone.

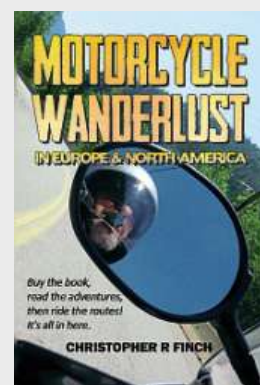
Next month: Riding The Remarkables, Bert Munro's Indian and bike riding cowboys

Read the book...

Chris Finch has written a book about his epic trips, some of which he's already described in *MSL*. *Motorcycle Wanderlust* covers five trips in detail, four of which have a daily route card, so you can recreate them. It's available through Waterstones, WHSmith, Blackwells, Foyles, independent bookshops and online.

Motorcycle Wanderlust in Europe and North America, Christopher Finch

Austin Macauley Publishers Ltd, ISBN: 9781784551254, Price: £8.99



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CLUB FOCUS

Moto Guzzi Club GB

The Moto Guzzi Club GB was established in 1976 by 40 enthusiasts in London. It now has around 2000 members in 43 branches around the world.

WHAT DOES YOUR CLUB OFFER ITS MEMBERS?

A bimonthly club mag, events and rallies in the UK and abroad, branch activities, a club website with dedicated member's area and forum, free member's advertising in the mag and online, club regalia, a free machine dating service, discounted event ticket prices, outlets and companies offering discounts and even BMF & MAG affiliation and many associated benefits.

WHAT EVENTS DO YOU RUN?

Rallies/camping weekends in the UK and abroad ranging from small (30 to 50) to our big annual event for 500. Events are known for their friendliness and laid-back style. The club and branches also attend many shows including the Big Bike Bonanza at Mallory and many classic bike Shows.

ARE THERE ANY SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS?

We are an independent motorcycle club for Moto Guzzi enthusiasts. Whether it's the early singles or the modern V7s, racing or off-roading, renovating and restoring, bimbly or blasting you are welcome to share your interest in all things Guzzi. You do not have to own a Moto Guzzi to join in the fun, and as an independent club you will receive independent advice.

WHERE CAN WE JOIN?

www.motoguzziclub.co.uk for all information galleries and contact details depending on what you would like to know.



Tell us about your club

Tell our readers about your club for free! Email jmilbank@mortons.co.uk for a questionnaire.

EVENTS

OCTOBER

- | | | | |
|-------|--|-------|--|
| 2-4 | British Superbikes,
Silverstone GP.
www.britishsuperbike.com | 17-18 | The 22nd Carole Nash Classic Motorcycle Mechanics Show
www.classicbikeshows.com |
| 3 | Ride to the Wall,
from various locations in the country, to National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire.
01283 792333.
www.ridetothewall.org.uk | 18 | Red Oktober,
Eastern Bloc Vehicle Day
www.ace-cafe-london.com |
| 3 | Skillshare Morning,
The Aviator Restaurant, Gloucestershire Airport.
www.rospe-roadar.org/glos | 18 | MotoGP - Australia,
www.motogp.com |
| 4 | The British Two Stroke Club Ltd. Rutland Borders Run,
The Rose & Crown, Tilton, Leics.
0116 275 0532 | 18 | World Superbikes,
Round 14, Losail
www.worldsbk.com |
| 4 | Hornet Swarm & Hondas,
www.ace-cafe-london.com | 18 | Hoggin' the Bridge,
Bristol
www.hogginthebridge.co.uk |
| 4 | World Superbikes - Round 13,
Magny-Cours.
www.worldsbk.com | 25 | South of England Real Classic Show & Bikejumble,
South of England Showground, West Sussex 01797 344277
www.elk-promotions.co.uk |
| 4 | Classic Motorcycle Show,
Yorkshire Waterways Museum.
01405 768730
www.waterwaysmuseum.org.uk | 25 | MotoGP - Malaysia,
www.motogp.com |
| 7 | VMCC (Essex) Wrinkly Run
Costa car park, Tollgate Centre, Colchester. 01206 384764 | 29-1 | International Dirt Bike Show,
Stoneleigh Park
www.classicbikeshows.com |
| 10 | Wetherby Autojumble,
Wetherby Racecourse
www.wetherbyautojumble.co.uk | | |
| 11 | Normous Newark,
Newark Showground, Notts NG24 2NY.
www.newarkautojumble.co.uk | | |
| 11 | MotoGP - Japan,
www.motogp.com | | |
| 12 | Brit Vs (Vincents & Velocette) & Classic Bike Day,
www.ace-cafe-london.com | | |
| 14 | Donington Park Ladies Only Track Day,
with Maria Costello
bit.ly/1EPT4s4 | | |
| 16-18 | British Superbikes,
Brands Hatch GP
www.britishsuperbike.com | | |

NOVEMBER

Ton Up Day - England Expects,
www.ace-cafe-london.com

Classic Bike & Car Meet,
The Victoria, Coalville
www.vicbikerspub.co.uk

The Footman James 15th Classic Vehicle Restoration Show,
Royal Bath & West showground

Poppy Day Parade & Service - Military Vehicle Meet,
www.ace-cafe-london.com

MotoGP - Valencia,
www.motogp.com

Lancaster Insurance Classic Motor Show, NEC
www.necclassicmotorshow.com

Normous Newark,
Newark Showground
www.newarkautojumble.co.uk

Bike Day,
www.ace-cafe-london.com

Please email your event details to jclements@mortons.co.uk



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Take nothing you don't know how to use

Richard Millington



To put together the right toolkit you first need to recognise that it's very unlikely you'll buy it off the shelf. You may be able to use a standard kit as a base, but you will need to modify and adapt it. This can mean adding, but should also mean subtracting, as unnecessary tools are just added weight.

The second thing that you need to establish is what jobs you want or might expect to do while away. Puncture repairs? Syphoning fuel? Bulb replacement? Tightening a loose mirror? Gudgeon pin circlip replacement? Which leads on to a subject of what is a reasonable on-the-road repair. Over the years this has changed...

Ted Simon set off around the world with his new Triumph in 1973, and took spare pistons with him, which he needed all too soon. Ted had researched and thought about what was likely to go wrong, and also knew what a gudgeon pin circlip was. And how to replace it. You need to do the same.

I don't mean carry spare pistons! You need to do a bit of research for your bike and establish what jobs you may need to do. This research can be a trip saver. There are forums for everything, and a quick search of the net will find one for your bike, but treat this information with care. While it may alert you to a trend or issue, bike forums also tend to be populated by doom sayers; by the end you may never want to ride your beast again. Remember, rarely does anyone go onto these forums to say "mine's great and nothing has ever gone wrong".

So now you have a list of jobs that you think are possible. Apply this list to your tour and estimate the likelihood. A long weekend in the Lake District is less likely to result in a snapped chain than two weeks off-roading in Portugal.

With your list of jobs you can consider your tool kit. This can be tricky to establish unless you actually do the job, know a friendly and knowledgeable mechanic or are willing to read the manual. But reading the manual will tell you the official and correct tool to take. I once met a chap who was riding around the world, and took not one but two torque wrenches. He was of course correct that every nut and bolt in the world has a correct torque setting, and in the clinical world of the assembly line each one is accurately torqued up. At the side of the road on the Patagonian Steppe however, you need to stick to

BMW Motorrad's tour leaders often get asked what tools they travel with, but it's not an easy question to answer...

the 'mechanic's standard torque setting'. This is called 'tight enough' and is measured with the in-built torque wrench of your own arm.

Simon Pavey has competed in 10 Dakar rallies, and was prepping for the 2013 outing when I was fortunate enough to be working with him. On the rally bike, where weight was critical, he carried a tool kit. Every piece was carefully planned with nothing missing and nothing not required. With this kit he could change the engine of the rally bike mid stage. And has done so. With a kit the size of six packets of cigarettes.

As each rally bike is different, to be certain he had everything needed and nothing spare he changed the engine of the bike in the workshop using just this kit, tweaking what was in it from last time to end up with the perfect kit for that bike. While most of us are not going to go to these lengths, it does lead on to the most important and relevant question...

What do you know how to do? There is no point taking gudgeon pin circlip pliers if you think the gudgeon pin should be on your jacket next to your Hog Chapter pin and your Rally pin. This is a time for absolute honesty and a reality check. Starting at the top you have Si Pavey, with the grit and determination of a Dakar finisher. At the other end is the guy who calls the dealer to replace an indicator bulb. Between these two extremes sit most of the rest of us.

So of your likely jobs, what do you actually know how to do? For many this will trim the tool kit considerably! But don't give up; most of us are not born with a spanner in hand, so get some training. Dealers will often do workshop days, as might your local college or bike club. We put all our tour leaders through the Off Road Skills Adventure Maintenance Day (www.offroadskills.com). Ignore the slightly off-pitch title as it's not just for adventure riders – it'll teach you the necessary techniques and understanding to get back on the road.

Who is Millington?

Richard Millington has been riding for more than 30 years, touring for more than 25, and has never looked back. He's the founder of Motorrad Tours, and has ridden on five continents, guiding motorcycle tours in Europe, Africa and North and South America.

www.motorrad-tours.com offers a wide range of adventures, with something for every rider...



Welcome to Scotland



Beautiful scenery, fantastic culture, rich in history and rammed with great roads; it's the perfect place to test Honda's VRF1200X.

WORDS: Bruce Wilson **PHOTOS:** Anna Wilson

For most of us, Scotland is within a single day's ride, and yet so many of us overlook it in favour of the Continent. Warmer weather, exotic foods and money which looks as though it's straight out of the Monopoly box are propositions hard to refuse. But

Scotland is a hidden gem, which doesn't require days stuck travelling motorways, expensive mobile phone roaming charges or pricey Channel crossing fares.

You don't even need a phrase book but what you do need is a few days spare and the inclination to see some of the most stunning views the world has to offer, complemented nicely by some outrageously winding roads and an abundance of characterful people. Of course, a bike would also come in handy.



In my case, a Honda VFR1200X was to be that handy motorcycle, complete with a Dual Clutch Transmission (DCT) auto gearbox, panniers and a top-box. Joining me, and placed in charge of the navigating and photography, was my wife Anna, who'd predetermined our first stop of the trip: Dunblane. Classed as a city, thanks to its cathedral, the historic settlement has a tiny population of around 10,000 people – two of whom just happened to be good friends of ours and had kindly offered to put us up for the night...

With panniers brimming and the Honda's relatively small screen manually adjusted to its highest position, we were soon on our way. Well, after a short spell spent figuring out exactly how the DCT worked.

Lacking both a clutch lever and gear selector, the Honda looks bizarre. In place of the conventional controls are a number of buttons, littering both sides of the bike's wide and raised bars. Firing the VFR into life allows you to rev it, but it won't go anywhere, as I learned to my embarrassment. The rider has to select a mode to engage drive, of which you can toggle through two; D (which is more docile) and S (which is more sporty). On application, the Honda gives a confirming nudge forward and your selection is highlighted on the clear, all-digital dash. With that you just twist the throttle and off you go, much like a big scooter.

Those first few miles were something of a revelation, having to remind myself there was no need to pull on a clutch lever or grind my way through the 'box. The DCT just did it all, and superbly smoothly as well in D-mode.

Eager taps on my shoulder were Anna's way of insisting we stopped at the Ferrybridge services, just off the A1(M). We'd only been riding an hour and a half, but the saddle was proving a pain in the backside. I was questioning how on earth we'd survive four full days of riding; legs stretched, we cracked on and this time made it all the way to Penrith before throwing in the towel and performing a much-needed fuel stop. The VFR's dash was saying we were down to our last 50 miles, and I didn't fancy pushing the Honda. The Crosstourer is a



mammoth of a bike, weighing in at 285kg, minus the panniers or their contents. It's also pretty high, with the seat at 850mm. Just to manoeuvre the Honda by foot was an epic challenge (I'm 5ft 10in), and I was dreading the prospect of pulling up on some dodgy camber, at which point I'd probably struggle to get a foot fully planted on the ground, let alone manage the combined 500kg+ weight of our mass.

Trip metre reset, we were soon on the M6 and following in the wake of a terrible storm. Huge boards on the motorway warned of imminent danger – not that I needed them to tell me the Honda was going to feel a bit wayward; by this point already being forced to lean the bike in a straight-line. A whole 216 miles in, we reached Gretna Green and crossed over into Scotland, celebrating with another leg stretch, muffin and a coffee. We saw no kilts, but remained optimistic.

OVER THE BORDER

The M74 is perhaps the most picturesque motorway in the UK. Follow it for long enough and you'll eventually reach Glasgow, but not before you've ridden through some stunning scenery. Vast green hills smother you on both sides, moorland and forests lining the perfectly smooth Tarmac as it meanders along. It seems wrong to talk so enthusiastically about a motorway, but it really is quite unlike any other. And the best thing is that it's

TOP: Heading for the hills – rolling hills greet you as you cross the border into Scotland.

ABOVE LEFT: Screen adjustment – You need to remove four bolts to adjust the screen on the Honda.

ABOVE RIGHT: Plenty of space in the optional panniers and top box.



If you only ride one road, make sure it's the A830 from Mallaig to Fort William.

typically underpopulated by other road users – the perfect time to click on the Honda's cruise control and indulge in the surroundings.

Except, the Honda didn't have cruise control, nor heated grips to fend off the chilly air we were encountering. It did, however, offer three levels of traction control, which would have been handy if someone had thrown a bucket of oil at us – which they

TOP LEFT: Stirling's beheading stone has seen some action over the years.

ABOVE LEFT: The historic city of Stirling is best observed from above.

ABOVE: Stirling Castle has an impressive history.

didn't. Instead, we technophobically ticked off the last 100 miles of our ride, making it up to Dunblane some five hours after setting off.

Dunblane is situated in Stirlingshire, coming under the remit of the city of Stirling. The latter is geographically smack in between Edinburgh and Glasgow, and was for a long time the most important location in Scotland, home to its royal family who lived within the city's impressive fortified hilltop castle. Normal people would ride up and park in the specifically located castle car park, but we elected to walk our way to the summit. By doing so, we were treated to a spectacular view over the ancient city, which also houses a ridiculously impressive monument to Sir William Wallace.

From Stirling, you can take a very straight and boring ride north along the average-speed-camera A9 carriageway. But having sat on it for all of 10 miles, we detoured onto the scenic A822, passing the famous Gleneagles golf course in the process. As luck would have it, the weather was being kind, and allowed for some pretty spirited riding along the route, which proved reminiscent of the Dales. Woods, streams and stone-built walls decorated its path, rolling up and down with the undulating profile of the landscape. The Honda proved a real joy to throw around; up until this point, most of the roads had been big and boring, so it was fantastic to learn how planted and agile the behemoth could be.

The suspension is adjustable, but the standard settings were pretty decent, with my only criticism being a wallowing rear-end when the road got a little choppy. Passing through a number of quaint villages, the Honda feels really well balanced and is surprisingly easy to ride at a snail's pace for such a big machine. The steering is light and neutral and the power delivery in D-mode makes the motor feel friendly and predictable, aided by perfect fuelling.

During U-turns though, and without a clutch to hold on the biting point, you have to rely solely on yourself to ask for just enough pick-up to keep the motor engaged, which takes some learning. My first few turns were hard work, tense and terrible.

Be sure to visit: Stirling Castle

Stirling | £14.50 (adult) | www.stirlingcastle.gov.uk | 01786 450 000

Set high above the city of Stirling, the centuries old castle was once a place of great importance to the Scottish monarchy and foreign dignitaries. Evolved over many lifetimes, the stunning castle grounds are quite unique in their build, the culmination of multiple different buildings from several different reigns of power.

With its combination of history and impressive architecture, it's easy to lose track of time as you explore all it has to offer. Actors also help to relive the castle's heydays and educate you on a lifestyle that seems virtually incomprehensible today. One of the most wowing elements to the experience is stepping into the Great Hall; built in 1503 for King James IV.

Capable of seating over 500 people at any one time, the impressive building was later transformed into barracks for the military. Complete with fortifications and an original battery that was used against the Jacobite Rising of 1689, the Stirling Castle experience is a truly special one.





HEADING FOR INVERNESS

The A822 eventually merges with the A826 and then the A827, meeting up once more with the A9 at Pitlochry. The original plan had been to head through the Cairngorms on the stunning Glenshee road, which I'd ridden previously and can't recommend enough, but time was against us so we had to get back on the depressing A9.

The road itself still cuts through the Cairngorms, albeit in a much duller way, with far less attractive scenery and constant speed cameras. Stirling had been a pleasurable experience, but our overindulgence in time spent visiting was making us pay the price on the final stint up to Inverness. Quite like the M74, the road is surrounded by fantastic views, but knowing first hand that there was a far nicer road to travel on had me spitting feathers the whole way to that night's hotel.

The pannier system on the Honda is pretty decent and by this point in the trip Anna was becoming a dab hand at loading and unloading them. They could quickly be removed, but it seemed a bit extreme carrying three enormous boxes with you everywhere you checked in. They were safe on the bike, and the bike was safe (hopefully) because it was constantly secured by a padlock and chain each night. When riding, the chain would wrap neatly around the base of the luggage rack and keep out of harm's way.

The following morning began with a trip through the centre of Inverness. It's a really pleasant place to ride through, brimming with old-world architecture and tourist-friendly shops. Following the course of the River

ABOVE: The A822 is reminiscent of roads in the Dales.

The luggage system

The Crosstourer comes as standard without luggage, but it can take both a topbox (39 litres) and panniers (39 litres and 35 litres). The left-side pannier and topbox are both big enough to accommodate a full-size helmet each, while the exhaust slightly impedes the right-side pannier. The only downside to the luggage is the price – £550 for the topbox and £1200 for the panniers. Honda does a number of special Crosstourer-spec packages, which each make the luggage far more affordable.



Ness eastwards, the A82 leads directly to the famous Loch, which grows in girth the farther you ride. Huge mountains on each side of the water make the vista even more impressive, with plenty of pull-in places for you to stop and take a moment to absorb the sights.

From Drumnadrochit we headed north on the squirrely A833, which kicked off with uphill hairpins and offered a great view over Loch Ness behind us.

For most of the journey the Honda had remained in D-mode, but this route warranted a shift to the pokier S-mode. The biggest difference between the two settings is the latter doesn't short-shift through the 'box, so you have more revs and better drive to tackle steep climbs.

I could have also downshifted further by using the paddleshift gear selectors, but the automated selection proved perfect. The A833 eventually levels off and the landscape morphs from woodland to moorland, with the occasional small lake thrown in. The road is pleasantly twisty and not in bad condition. From Muir of Ord you can pick up the A9 again and continue all the way up to John o'Groats, but the prospect of more speed cameras made us turn eastwards towards Garve on the A835. We weren't on the main road for long,

Be sure to visit: Loch Ness Centre and Exhibition

Drumnadrochit, Loch Ness | £7.45 (adult) | www.lochness.com

Based on the shores of Loch Ness, the experience gives a fantastic insight into the search for the famed Loch Ness monster. Contrary to what you might think, the exhibition focuses on why it's unlikely there is such a beast lurking below the clear waters, challenging hundreds of sightings over many decades with a rational and scientific approach.

The journey is very considered and covers everything from how the Loch was formed, to what animals and fish inhabited the local area. You'll also get a sense of how committed people have been in the search for Nessy; the use of sonar and miniature submarines just two of the methods used.



Nearing the Isle of Skye, the road above Lochcarron is simply stunning.



The pillion's perspective - Anna Wilson

With its enormous seat and a topbox for a backrest, I was pretty excited about going pillion on the Crosstourer. It looked a comfortable place to perch, supported by decent sized grab handles on each side of the saddle. I've been exposed to a whole plethora of pillion seats over the years, but none have ever felt as comfortable as the softly padded Honda's.

Hopes of a luxurious 1200-mile trip around Scotland didn't last long, though, as the saddle had soon turned uncomfortable after the first 100 miles, resulting in a very numb bum. This was to become the norm throughout the entire trip, requiring many more regular stops than first anticipated. It was a shame, as otherwise the Crosstourer proved a great bike to tour on.

The leg space was plentiful and the knee angle relaxed, the height of the seat also meant I wasn't towering way above Bruce, meaning I was shielded



from the worst of the wind and rain – of which there was plenty. The bike was super smooth on gear changes, so I never found myself clashing helmets with my chauffer, which made for a nice change.

On a negative note, I found the bike to be surprisingly vibey, especially through the pegs. Also, with my feet planted on them, my boots' heels (size 6) were often contacting the panniers. Overall, life on the back of the Honda wasn't terrible. There are pros and cons to every bike, and this was far from the worst pillion experience I've known.

branching off at Garve on the A832 towards Achanalt. We were now in proper Highlands territory, surrounded by mountains in all directions. The air was fresh and cold as we climbed and descended along the road like a yo-yo, eventually plateauing in a valley.

At Achnasheen we took the A890, which narrowed to a single track, full of potholes and surrounded by woods. The scenery became reminiscent of the Alps, the traffic morphing from holidaymakers to logging lorries. Having to constantly stop and give way to oncoming vehicles, the route became convoluted and the overwhelming amount of potholes didn't make life any easier. The great views did help though, especially on arriving at Lochcarron, where the sea air filled our lungs instantly on reaching the coastal loch.

TO THE FERRY

The final stint to the Isle of Skye saw us climb up high on a breathtaking trail, the coast to our right as we descended. Compared to the landscape where our ride had started, everything looked far more dramatic and spectacular. There's no chance of confusing Scotland's east and west coastlines, with the former being by far the more stunning. The route to Skye had taken around five hours, and we were racing south to catch a ferry, having entered the island by a road bridge in the north. You can clearly make out the mainland from the island, the water between the two being crossed several times daily by the CalMac ferry (www.calmac.co.uk).

We weren't the only bike waiting to board the sizeable ship, being joined by a French couple on a Harley. With the bikes lashed to the deck, 30 minutes of conversed Frenglish was undertaken before the voyage was completed. If you only ride one road in



Scotland, make sure it's the A830 from Mallaig to Fort William. Nothing can prepare you for its raw beauty, which stretches for 50 miles and incorporates everything from sea views to colossal rock faces and sporadic lakes, as the road leaves the coastline and heads inland after Arisaig. You'll find yourself tootling around at 20mph, your eyes looking everywhere but the road as you try your utmost to take in the sheer splendour of the surroundings. There are no houses, habitats, or fuel stations to ruin the vistas and the traffic is typically tourist-fuelled and minimal, so there's no need to rush.

Fort William is famous for many things, having played host to a Royal Naval base during the Second World War, as well as being the pivotal location for the commandos' training ground. It's a stone's throw away from Scotland's highest munro (mountain) Ben Nevis, and is also home to the namesake fort which held against the Jacobite uprising of the 18th century. The town itself sits at the head of Loch Linnhe – one of Scotland's largest sea lochs. As places to stop the night go, Fort William scores pretty highly.

ONE OF MY FAVOURITE CITIES

The A828 followed Loch Linnhe's scenic course for 40 miles, bringing us out at a trellis-type bridge in Connel. That's where we waved goodbye to the coast and started working our way inland on the A85. Inverary was next

on our path, arriving at the 18th century town in time for the start of its annual Highland Games, situated within the grounds of the impressive castle.

Having evaded the forecast bad weather for most of our trip, we were subjected to some pretty shocking downpours, which gave a chance for the Honda to show off its high level of weather protection. The majority of your body is safeguarded from glancing rain, but there was no escaping the torrential stuff we were faced with.

Having circulated north of Inverary's Loch Fyne, we made our towards Loch Lomond and rode down its west coast, caught up in some horrendous traffic. The ride was long, slow and boring until we reached the south shore and joined the A811, heading once again to Stirling. After Loch Lomond, you start to leave behind the Trossachs National Park and the terrain becomes much less dramatic and more rolling. It marked the beginning of the end, as we watched the impressive mountains fade in the Honda's big and clear mirrors. By this point, we'd clocked up around 800 miles, which had averaged an impressive 51mpg, and still had another 400 before reaching home. We shot past Stirling and picked up the M9 for Edinburgh. Within an hour we were riding the Crosstourer through the quaint and cobbled streets of Scotland's capital city, admiring its outstanding architecture as we went. Of all the cities I've visited in the world, Edinburgh is most certainly rated in my top

TOP LEFT: Great roads lead you all the way to the port of Armadale.

TOP RIGHT: Roll-on, ride-off having made it to Mallaig on the mainland.

ABOVE LEFT: Anna exploring Loch Linnhe, which is one of the longest lochs in Scotland.

ABOVE MIDDLE: Love them or hate them, you'll find yourself staring at performing pipers.

ABOVE RIGHT: Inverary has some great eateries and plenty of shops to explore.



three. It's stunning, clean and lacks the hustle of many others.

Heading for home that next morning, we decided to stretch the Honda's legs down the A68. Once more, we were hampered by speed cameras, but it offered great views and a rollercoaster ride of undulations. Jedburgh marked the last of the Scottish settlements before reaching English soil. The geographical ridge that divides Scotland and England is impressive, with some great views over both nations. As sad as it was to be leaving Scotland, the beauty of Northumberland and the Kielder Forest Park certainly made for an enjoyable start to our ride home. Naturally, getting back on the A1(M) had quite the opposite effect, but it did help to reiterate just how spectacular our trip had been. Scotland had delivered in so many ways, generating nothing but fond memories every inch of the way. Easy to access, marvellous to experience and the perfect location for a short getaway, we couldn't have asked for more.

ABOVE: Edinburgh's rich architecture is well worth exploring.

Be sure to visit: The Edinburgh Dungeon

Edinburgh (central) | £16.95 (adult) |
www.thedungeons.com | 08714 232 250

If you like your history and don't mind a scare or two along the way, the Edinburgh Dungeon is a must-visit attraction. It's just below Edinburgh's Royal Mile, an area rich in fine architecture and culture. Submerging into the streets below the ancient city, you work your way through an assortment of superbly presented scenarios, complete with individual actors who scare you silly on your path through times gone by.

When we went, the theme of the Dungeons was body stealing and carnivores. Without ruining things, everyone on our tour group came out having been well and truly terrified, much to our delight. The final passage is a room of mirrors, which sends you crazy as you desperately seek a way out.



Plan your route

If you're planning a trip to Scotland make sure to have a good look at www.visitscotland.com. The site is full of useful information on where to stop and things you can do, ensuring you make the most of your trip to Scotland.



It's the conversations

Maynard Hershon



Jack was adamant: “We don’t get tired of riding because it’s demanding every minute. It’s not like driving a car. A car is in its natural state sitting on four wheels. A two-wheeled vehicle is in its natural state lying on its side in the road. We have to make it do what we want it to do.”

Jack Robinson is president of the Four-Stroke Singles National Owners Club, FSSNOC. We’d met for lunch, maybe 20 of us FSSNOCers, gray-haired guys and a couple of women, in tiny Centennial, Wyoming, west of Laramie. Thumper Cafes, these meetings are called.

Jack had ridden his CBR250R, Repsol edition, to Centennial from Hutchinson, Kansas, many hundreds of miles away. His little single-cylinder Honda shows 43,000 miles at this point, having needed tyres, oil changes and little else.

I rode my ZRX to Laramie – about 160 miles from my home in Denver. A university town, Laramie seemed to be a mix of cultures, big hats and crunchy granola. In the evening, I rode downtown to a big outdoor party, a country-rock band and dancing in the street.

In the morning, I rode to Centennial. I’d like to urge you to ride to Centennial when you can. Only one road goes there. The limit is 65. You won’t want to ride faster. To me, that part of Wyoming felt like The West.

What did I see? Giant sky. Distant snow-capped mountains. Rolling green pasture land, ranches or farms set well back from the road, often miles apart, nothing moving on Saturday morning but me.

And at the end of my lovely ride – a Thumper Cafe. And the charm of these lovely in scenic, rustic destinations comes from the conversations.

At lunch I sat across from an old dude who’d owned an F650CS BMW single. The CS, sold in the US from 2001 to 2005, was a commuter bike for trendy urban riders. Low-geared, belt-driven and vaguely feminine – we hairy-chested, genuine motorcyclists weren’t interested.

He said he’d bought his silly little single for \$5500 and sold it not long ago for \$2200. With 222,000 miles on it! The last valve adjustment had been done at 40,000. Unless you habitually bounce the tach needle off the redline, he said, the valves could be left alone.

I talked at some length with a guy who’d ridden to Centennial from western Kentucky, a good distance for a two or three-hour lunch experience. I told him that I had a story and wanted his take on what had happened.

In ’63 or ’64, I said, I’d only been riding a year or so. A friend and I rode our motorcycles south from our homes in Indianapolis into Kentucky. We were headed

Is this the beginning of the end for clubs?

for Harlan County, scene of bloody labour disputes around the coal mines. Like the Oklahoma Panhandle, Harlan was said to have been effectively lawless for decades. We wanted to see if the stories were true.

At a hotel in Lexington, the desk clerk asked us where we were from and where we were headed. We told him we were riding east to Harlan. I can hear his voice half a century later.

“None of my business,” he said, “but I wouldn’t go over there if I were you. Two college boys, nice new motorcycles – you’re liable to ride over there and never be heard from again.”

In the morning we headed back north. All these years later and I’ve never been sure our decision was correct. After all, we’re told over and over that this place is dangerous and that place is dangerous – but is all that true?

So I looked at the guy from Kentucky. I’ve been wondering about this for decades, I said. Were we right to turn back? Was the desk clerk’s advice correct?

I wouldn’t go over there by myself, he said. No-sir, there are places there I just wouldn’t go.

Because we’re all old, we are concerned with what we see from younger people. One guy said “I’ll be riding with young guys and we’ll stop for lunch. At first they talk about their riding lives. Soon, though, they’re reading me jokes off their smartphone screens, not looking up at all.”

Around the table we all nodded.

The most common bike at FSSNOC events has for years been Kawasaki’s KLR650, a single-cylinder ‘adventure’ model now favoured by bushy-bearded new riders. The conversation turned to those new riders, KLRs and the eventual fate of the club.

Many of us worry as we watch the original members fall away from the club we love, some grown too old or infirm to ride and some just gone. We worry about the club’s long-term life. We’re all getting older and the world is changing out from under us.

One guy said: “I think many people don’t even know that their KLR is a single. They push the button... and it’s running. They have no understanding of the mechanical aspects and no interest in learning about them. They’re not enthusiasts... or not what we think of as enthusiasts.

“They own a four-stroke single but they’re unaware of where singles fit into the great motorcycling scheme of things. How will you induce them to join a club like this for riders of singles? How will you induce them to join any motorcycle club at all?”

Who is Hershon?

MSL’s Maynard is our man with a very unique view on motorcycling from both sides of the pond. Yes, he is American. Yes, he does ride around on a second-hand Kawasaki that causes him grief... and yes, he does have his finger right on the pulse of life on two wheels

Used test: **2007 Yamaha FZ6**

Described as a sporty workhorse, Yamaha went for a more peaky engine with the 2007 Fazer's revision. Chris Moss takes one for a ride...

WORDS: Chris Moss **PHOTOGRAPHY:** Mike Weston

The original Fazer – the FZS600 – made quite an impact on the budget middleweight class when it was introduced in 1998. Despite being basic in specification and not exactly blessed with too much style, the Fazer still sold well; a quick ride on one helps to understand why.

Its detuned Thundercat four-cylinder engine belies its capacity and configuration, offering plenty of usable midrange and lower rpm drive. And though its steel-framed chassis isn't anything to shout about, it delivers capable handling. Equipped with excellent brakes – pinched from the original R1 superbike – the Fazer can be hustled along backroads more than competently.

Also happy at slower speeds, the Yamaha's comfort and user-friendly character give it plenty of all-round potential. Revised very slightly in 2000, detailed changes to the Yamaha included a bigger fuel tank, new seat, and preload adjustment for the forks. Then in 2002 a restyled fairing and tank gave the bike much more aesthetic appeal, with new clocks also helping to boost its more modern look. In time tighter emission rulings killed it off, and in 2004 it was superseded by the naked FZ6 and half-faired FZ6 Fazers.

Both bikes were completely new. They featured much sportier styling, underseat pipes, an alloy frame and swingarm, and an engine based on the R6 sports bike. Detuned, the fuel-injected inline four still made just under 100bhp – though its power delivery was more rev-dependant than the original motor.

Suspension was still quite basic in spec, and the brakes only had twin-piston calipers, though ABS became an option in 2006. The 2007-on restyled S2 models (like the one we've tested here) came with more mid-range power, superior monobloc four-piston calipers (also with an ABS option), and new clocks, with the majority of bikes having a black-finished engine and chassis. A cheaper, reduced power, lower-spec option, similar to the 2004 bikes was also available.





Specification

YAMAHA FZ6

ENGINE: 599cc, liquid-cooled, 16v, dohc, inline four

POWER: 96bhp (72kW) @ 12,000rpm

TORQUE: 46lb-ft (62Nm) @ 6400rpm

FRAME: Die-cast diamond

SUSPENSION: (F) 43mm telescopic forks, no adjustment; (R) Rising-rate monoshock, adjustable preload

BRAKES: (F) Twin 298mm discs, four-piston calipers; (R) 245mm disc, single-piston caliper

TYRES: (F) 120/70-17; (R) 180/55-17

SEAT HEIGHT: 795mm

WHEELBASE: 1440mm

KERB WEIGHT: 201kg

FUEL CAPACITY: 19 litres



VALUES

**£2000-
£4500**

* Prices are for early models sold privately in average condition, to almost new, well cared-for examples available at dealers.

If you think of the Yamaha more as a budget, or beginner's sports bike then you stand a much greater chance of getting along with it...

OWNER'S VIEW

A 56-year-old insurance assessor from Wantage, Ian Hyne has an FZ6: "My Fazer has gone from being my first bike to a workhorse that I end up using very regularly. I bought it new in 2009, and loved riding it every time I went out. I was pretty new to biking back then and really looked after it. It'd be serviced on time every time, and when I wasn't riding it, I'd be polishing it to death. By the time I'd done 18,000 miles on it, I felt I'd moved up the biking ladder enough to warrant having a sportsbike.

"Originally I thought I'd just trade the 600 in for the used 2010 R1 I bought in 2013. But I couldn't quite get the deal I wanted, and didn't want to part with what had been my first real bike. I adore the 1000, but I'm so happy to have held on to the 600, which I now use as a second bike. It's done 42,000 miles and still runs well. I ride it in all weathers, and though it's used more than ever, I prefer to use my R1 for 'special occasions'. The bigger bike is now my priority, so the Fazer doesn't get the devotion it used to. Even so, I still keep it pretty clean and though it's not as immaculate as it once always

was, I'd say it's hanging together well.

"There's a bit of corrosion here and there, as well as a few little battle scars. I still like riding it, and compared to the R1 I really have to thrash it to keep it on song. Having to change gear a lot more often is something I've got used to, though if I've had a long day I usually just trundle home on it quite steadily as I can't be bothered putting the effort in.

"It's been pretty good to me really; I put a new aftermarket shock in it at 30,000 miles and had some running problems thanks to a dodgy throttle position sensor a little later. I usually chuck a new set of tyres on it every 6000 miles, with sports touring options being best for me. I don't take it to be dealer serviced any longer, though I did make an exception for the valve checks. Generally I find it pretty easy to work on and stuff like oil and filter changes are a doddle. It'll be due another valve check soon, and I suspect I'll let it go for another few miles as it didn't need any adjustment last time! I think I'll probably sell the R1 before the Fazer. I've grown so attached to it."

WHAT'S IT LIKE TO RIDE?

There are many aspects of the Fazer that make it appealing to a broad audience, but the character of the engine is ultimately what will define whether you like this bike or not. There's no doubt the inline four is a little more flexible than the first incarnation fitted to the 2004 model, but even so, the R6-derived motor still shares much of the temperament of the sports bike's power unit.

Depending on the situation you find yourself in, it's generally important to keep it revving to produce adequate power, or at least be in a gear to enable those revs to be accessed quickly. It's all a question of the level of urgency to gain or maintain speed. I found myself liking these manners on occasion, and being irritated by them on just as many others.

If the roads were clear and it was easier to predict speed requirements, then I enjoyed keeping the engine singing and sampling its impressive power. Doing that gives the bike an exciting and involving feel that makes



Fuel gauge is a great feature of the Fazer's clocks.



rides more memorable and rewarding. Once you've appreciated that a) keeping the engine spinning is important for best results and, more to the point b) if you can get into the mood for that style of riding, then the Fazer is likely to be more of a hit with you. It's quite a thrilling bike when things are just right.

Lower levels of satisfaction come along when circumstances differ. On a busier and less familiar route along which your speed often needs to change, then the constant requirement to keep the engine in its sweet spot can become a bit of a pain. It simply doesn't have sufficient torque to get you up to speed via a simple yank on the throttle alone.

The necessity to hunt for revs becomes even more irritating if you're loaded up with a pillion or some luggage. Staying in a lower gear to enable the slightly buzzy engine to provide the necessary acceleration gets a little tiring. It's not helped by the gearbox being a bit on the notchy side either. And while I'm having a gripe, the fuelling isn't perfect from a closed throttle; combined with the switch-like nature of the grabby clutch, town riding requires a delicate touch at times.

If you think of the Yamaha more as a budget, or beginner's sports bike then you stand a much greater chance of getting along with it. But I can't help thinking that if the engine was a little bit more flexible (ironically, a feature the very first model of the Fazer was so well-liked for), then the bike would be appropriate for a lot more riders. If it was, it would certainly match the versatility of the rest of the bike, which makes it fit for the majority of purposes.

The all-rounder qualities are headed by the bike's chassis; light and easy, the Fazer can be mastered by all sorts of riders, no matter what type of route is being travelled. The upright riding position and the leverage of the handlebars give it an agile and lively feel, and its



Luggage is a one of the first things many owners add.

DEALER SERVICING

MINOR @ 4000 MILES
/12 MONTHS

£100-£125

INTERIM @ 8000 MILES
/24 MONTHS

£175-£200

MAJOR @ 24,000

£300-£350

*Costs will vary depending on labour rates and condition of your bike.

I SELL THEM

Dave Hammond of Peter Hammond's in Cirencester recalls the FZ6 Fazer S2: "It wasn't a massive seller for us, though I do think it was a good, underrated bike. As far as buyers are concerned, there was no real set pattern. Older guys would have them for general duties, especially commuting. And we'd occasionally sell to younger riders who wanted something more sporty, but couldn't afford the insurance on bikes like an R6.

"The revvy engine didn't really suit the sort of bike it was and could divide opinion a bit. We don't see them too often nowadays, but from the ones we've sold and serviced I'd rate the

bike as pretty strong and reliable. One customer who used his for commuting clocked up 40,000 trouble-free miles. Though as he didn't clean it too often it did look a bit scruffy in places.

"You need to look after things like suspension linkages and brake calipers to stop them seizing. And though listed in the service schedule, greasing head, and swingarm pivot bearings often gets overlooked. The majority of bikes we see these days haven't been modified very much at all, save a chain oiler or taller screen. The Fazer is a sporty workhorse that can turn its hand to many tasks and is worth a look."



Altering the final drive can be great way to tweak the power delivery.

overall balance provides plenty of poise from less than walking pace all the way up to its maximum.

You can feel the suspension is of a more basic, budget specification when it's under more extreme pressures of very bumpy roads or high speed, but it's only a slight harshness and choppiness that's apparent, rather than anything more serious that threatens to reduce your control. To be honest, the bike's handling ability is good enough to venture on to a track. And I'm sure that there you'd continue to be impressed by its light, flickable nature and superb brakes. On the road, the brakes have plenty of power and a lovely feel that allows even sudden stopping to be done with full confidence – they are one of the Yamaha's most impressive features.

So too is its comfort. Sitting relaxed on the plush, stepped seat, and having the wind diverted nicely by the handlebar fairing is a good sign of an ability to cover plenty of ground without any sort of physical compromise. Footrests are at a comfortable height for both rider and pillion too. Two-up tours of Europe are well within the remit of this bike – engine power delivery notwithstanding. A selection of sensible equipment like a centrestand, grabrails, hugger and decent instruments that include a clock and fuel gauge underline the Fazer's useful design.

Together with its very attractive appearance it's tempting to give the bike a maximum score. But with an engine that will polarise opinion so much, that's not possible. Only after sampling the manners of the motor will you be in with a chance of knowing whether you're likely to take or leave this machine.



The motor's strong, but it needs to be kept on song.



HOW TO SPOT THE BEST FAZERS

The Fazer S2 has been on the market for over eight years now. It's been owned by a huge variety of riders. Many younger riders buy them as a first bike, though they're also popular with more experienced types.

Annual mileages vary enormously. Several early bikes have done over 20,000-30,000 miles, and it's important to check the valve clearances have been done on machines with over 24,000 miles on the clock – though strangely the check is actually scheduled at 26,000 miles.

Looked after, the Yamaha will look and run well for 50,000 miles or more. However it must be cared for well to give reliable service. Attention from owners differs greatly, though there are plenty of giveaways to indicate this. Check the overall condition of the bike. The Fazer's finish isn't too robust and provides good evidence of the sort of life it's led.

If it's thoroughly clean, even in more inaccessible areas, it's a good sign the

owner has been conscientious. Badly corroded parts show neglect and as there are enough bikes to choose from, either move on or bargain hard. Newer riders may well have had the odd fall or topple from the Fazer. Check for light crash damage to bar ends and engine covers. More serious damage to lock stops or frame spars points to more serious impacts and the cost of repair needs to be considered more carefully.

Home servicing is common as the bike isn't too hard to work on. But check receipts for what's claimed to have been done. Ideally a full service history, done by a reputable dealer can be provided. Fazers aren't usually modified too much. Again, the sort of mods will reflect on the owner. Chain oilers, taller screens, and crash protectors emphasise more sensible types. Loud pipes, garish paint schemes or go-faster stickers point to something different. Inspect the bike you're interested in well enough and you'll land yourself a useful and dependable machine.

COMFORT

The Yamaha is generally comfortable enough for all day rides. But tingles from the engine at high revs can cause finger numbness at sustained high revs. Foam grips and padded gloves can help, but ultimately it's something you need to live with. Heavier vibration indicates more serious issues.

FUELLING

The Fazer's fuel-injection system's pressure must be correct. Any drops can result in poor pulling power under load. Checking for blocked fuel filters, kinked fuel lines, or problems with the pressure regulator or pump itself can solve the issue.

THROTTLE POSITION SENSOR

The TPS can give trouble. Poor idling, stalling, misfiring and flat spots are all symptoms of a possible problem. Using the bike's on-board diagnostic checks can reveal the cause. Press and hold the Select and Reset buttons on the clocks, switch on the ignition and wait for 10 seconds until the display changes. Press both buttons again and twist the throttle open gently from closed to fully open. The displayed figures should run evenly from 15-100.

SUSPENSION

By now, early bikes' suspension could well be getting a little tired. A fork service will improve action, though a rebuild would bring better results. Fitting a decent aftermarket shock can transform the handling and make the rear end feel far more composed.



INSPECT IT

Early S2s are getting on a bit, so it's wise to check for age-related problems like corroded wiring and connectors. Looked after and serviced on time the Yamaha will last and perform well. Neglected, it can soon look tatty and run poorly. The overall condition of the bike will reveal all the clues you need.

GEARING

Lowering the overall gearing can help get around the dip in mid-range power. Try fitting a one tooth gearbox sprocket, or if that's not enough a one-tooth bigger rear one. Speedo readings will be altered.

MID-RANGE POWER BOOST

Fitting aftermarket end cans and a Power Commander or having the ECU flashed (try BSD on 01733 223377) will improve the way the engine delivers its power and make it appreciably more flexible. Fuel consumption will improve too, soon helping to pay for the work.

BRAKING

Kept clean and serviced, the four-piston calipers will provide powerful braking performance. But they're prone to seizure, reducing power and causing disc warpage. Check how freely the wheel rotates and disc run out. ABS bikes are worth more.

OTHER BIKES TO CONSIDER



SUZUKI GSR600

2006-2010, 599cc, inline four, 90bhp, 183kg

Stylish, basic-spec, B-King aping roadster has the power to excite – as long as detuned GSX-R 600 motor is revved harder. Handles and stops well. Naked design limits comfort, and finish isn't great.



HONDA HORNET

2007-2013, 599cc, inline four, 100bhp, 173kg

The stylish, Italian-built Honda turns heads. Show is matched by go, even if the 600RR-derived motor has to be spun to get the most from it. Light and agile, having fun is easy. Honda quality and back-up are other pluses.



DUCATI MONSTER 696

2008-2012, 695cc, 90° V-twin, 80bhp, 161kg

An icon, the Duke has lots of cred and Italian allure. It looks gorgeous, sounds beautiful and has a famous name. May have less power, but as it's a lot easier to access you'll rarely feel short. Handles sharply and accurately.



KAWASAKI Z750

2007-2012, 748cc, inline four, 105bhp, 203kg

Additional cc's make the downsized ZX-9R engine more flexible and usable. Futuristic styling looks the part, and thanks to the balance of the motor and chassis the Kawasaki goes nicely too.



All I could wish for

A trip to the Ulster GP for John and his mates revealed the Versys to be The Best Bike Ever.



The rider

JOHN MILBANK

Editor of MSL, John's passion for bikes started with a pillion ride on an FZR1000 EXUP; he's since owned everything from a DT80 to his current motorcycle, a Ducati Monster S4R. Excited by all bikes, his dream garage includes a Pan European and a VMAX.



The bike

KAWASAKI VERSYS 650

Cost new: £6749

Performance: 68bhp, 47lb-ft

Wet weight: 216kg

Tank size: 21 litres

Seat height: 840mm

This month

Miles: 947

Miles in total: 3549

Average mpg: 50.8

Highlights this month: The Causeway Coastal road

Lowlights this month: Early mornings

I hate Guinness. I don't like whisky either, but I made an exception for the thick, tarry brew when a group of friends and I visited Joey's bar in Ballymoney, County Antrim. A mecca for fans of one of the greatest motorcyclists ever (and one of the few 'celebrities' – along with John Thaw – that I got really upset about when I heard of their death), it's also just a short walk from the Dunlop Memorial Garden, where interlocking cast bronze statues of Joey and Robert celebrate their incredible racing careers. It might have been late on a Friday morning, but there was a steady stream of bikers coming through to pay their respects.

Two of those bikers – on Fireblades – decided to join us as we continued our day's ride up to Northern Ireland's Causeway Coastal Route. Our group was Mark on an R1, Tyler on a ZX-9R, Roger on a Tiger 1050, Mike on an MT-07 and Mark's dad, Mike, on his Daytona T595.

Maybe it was because it was my birthday, but we were blessed with glorious weather – up to Portrush, our first stop was the Giant's Causeway.

These interlocking basalt columns are fabled to have been built by warrior leader Finn MacCumhail as a causeway to the Scottish island of Staffa, which has similar formations.

Another theory is that they formed up to 60 million years ago as successive flows of lava inched towards the coast and cooled as they hit the sea, forming polygonal shapes

up to 25m high. In my head, our gang would sit quietly there and reflect on our luck. In reality, we were swamped by gaggles of tourists, so soon headed back to the bikes.

The road was good – really good. We soon broke off at our own pace, but the coastal road is clearly signposted. Stopping at the Carrick-A-Rede rope bridge, we gave it a miss due to the



MAIN IMAGE:

Mark, Tyler, Roger, Mike and Mike waiting for the bar to open...

ABOVE: At the Dunlop memorial garden.

LEFT: Strapping down for the ferry out to Ireland. I love that sheepskin seat cover!



ABOVE LEFT:
 Don't visit
 Northern Ireland
 without calling in
 at Joey's bar.

ABOVE MIDDLE:
 Anstey had little
 choice but to
 sign Tyler's
 programme...

ABOVE RIGHT:
 Almost stuck at
 Leathemstown: I
 found the one
 area of bog in the
 whole car park.



queues, but stocked up on scones and tea. Then things changed... the road became one of the best I've ever ridden. And that includes the stunning routes I've been lucky enough to enjoy through Spain and the Alps; sweeping, rolling hills, a good surface (though Mark did have a serious moment on the R1 when the back-end slid), and beautiful switchbacks. Of course, we were lucky to have such good weather, but combined with the views, this trip around to Waterfoot was utterly sublime.

From there to Larne is difficult to describe now because, incredibly, it was even better! Somehow I was leading a pack of Mark and Tyler, along with the two guys on 'Blades. On these tight roads, rock faces to the right, Irish Sea to the left, the 68bhp Versys was perfect. I don't say that lightly – this is a budget machine, making a third of the power of Mark's R1, but that was a ride that will stay with me forever.

The guys behind me might have been more skilled riders, but as Mark (who's an ex-Yamaha Past Masters champion) said: "I didn't want to come past – you had the view over the cars and walls on that thing. I wouldn't have wanted to go any quicker." And so it was, with a top-box and sheepskin seat cover, Held textiles and a flip-front lid, I had one of the best rides ever. Four high-end sports bikes were in the mirrors of a motorcycle that costs little more brand new than Mark's 2007 R1.

THE RACING

Friday's ride was the standout event for me, but the purpose of the trip was to watch the Ulster GP. Each lap of 'The World's Fastest Road Race' covers 7.4 miles of public roads, with little or no run-off. It's like a mini TT course, but as the bikes launch together from a grid, every pass gives you the excitement of very close racing.

That lack of run-off does mean that a lot of races get red-flagged. Thursday evening was very stop-start, especially after Guy Martin's crash. But this is raw

– seeing the likes of Martin, Hutchinson and Dunlop competing in races sponsored by the 'Topaz Airport Road Service Station' and 'McKinstry Skip Hire', at an event that's supported – along with Metzeler – by Lidl and 'Around A Pound' is a refreshing change to the huge corporate involvement in some racing. But it's no less gruelling... If every race ran to completion, Saturday would have seen someone like Hutchy racing 37 laps. That's 273.8 miles. And they top out at up to 196mph, averaging over 130mph in the Superbike races.

We spent Saturday on top of the Leathemstown grandstand – absolutely incredible racing, and having ridden the course the night before, we were stunned at how these riders can complete a lap in less than three and a half minutes.

But all the excitement was shattered as Tom McHale clipped the grass in front of us; his Honda slid down the track, hit the opposite bank and flipped, narrowly missing the crowd. He wasn't moving, and a hush descended as the doctor arrived on a Triumph Tiger. It was a long 10

minutes with a team behind hurriedly erected white sheets before Tom was bought out on a stretcher.

There was a huge cheer and long round of applause as he weakly raised his arm before being loaded into the ambulance (we've since heard that his injuries were minor, and he's expected to be back to full fitness by the time you read this). The relief in the crowd was obvious, many of us close to tears after seeing him wave.

It was a horrible reminder of the danger these men and women endure for their sport, and shortly after a rider was tragically killed at Deer's Leap. Our thoughts as we rode back were with the families and friends of these riders, left alone in the pits.

BACK TO THE MAINLAND

The journey to and from Northern Ireland was a mixture of dull A1, scenic A66 and exciting A75 – I did it with the top-box weighing 10.8kg, and the panniers a total of 24.9kg. I love the fact that the Versys has an under-slung exhaust – it means the superb Givi Trekker luggage can sit tight to the sides of the bike, and while the extra

RIGHT: The gang:
 Mike; the two
 Fireblade owners
 (get in touch if
 it's you!), Tyler,
 me, Mike, Mark
 and Roger.





load did make the bars want to flap at town speeds if let go, and the machine was noticeably lighter on the front-end at speed, with the preload wound all the way up it was still a very stable ride.

I'm not sure I needed to take all that gear – my mates managed with just tank bags or tail packs; I'm terrible at packing, but I did end up carrying stuff for them, and at least my luggage was secure and dry.

My sheepskin seat cover, taken from my daughter's old push-chair, made all the difference (and it seemed okay in the rain, covered by me when riding, and tucked in the top-box when stopped). The Versys' standard seat is too soft, so soon gets uncomfortable for my 15 stone mass, but the optional Kawasaki gel seat is way too hard.

This, held on with a bungee, made the journey home a lot more bearable.

Just one stop for fuel – drinking water while I waited in the queue to pay – from Cairnryan to Peterborough was 338 miles. We'd got up at 5am to catch the 7:30 ferry, and I got home tired, but not shattered; delighted with how the 649cc Kawasaki had performed.

Across from Joey's bar on the Friday had been a massive Ducati dealership. We drooled over the Panigales, as well as a mint Honda SP1, and I wanted to buy a key-ring for my Monster S4R. They didn't have any, but this trip has made me have to think even harder about what I really want to own.

Kawasaki will want the Versys back soon, but since I've had it, my own Ducati has been out just three times, never further than 80 miles. It couldn't have taken all the luggage that the Versys did, and it wouldn't have been any more fun on that coastal road.

I'm unbelievably lucky to borrow bikes as part of my job – next year I could have something equally as useful, and I'll be honest – this doesn't get my heart fluttering like the Ducati does when I look at it in the garage. But it's the one I take out all the time; popping to the shops, commuting to work, or riding some of the most exciting roads in the world. Would I be a fool to let the Versys go?

ABOVE LEFT:
Save some money by parking away from the Giant's Causeway Visitor Centre.

ABOVE RIGHT:
The superb Givi Trekker luggage had enough space for all my – and some other's – gear.



It's 7am at Belfast docks; ready for home.

The road was good – really good... we soon broke off at our own pace

John's tips for a great Northern Ireland adventure

- Don't park up at the visitor's centre at the Giant's Causeway – it's way too expensive. Pay £3 to park at the bottom of the hill in the railway station, or ride a short distance past the main entrance to see if you can find a safe space on the road.
- You don't have to pay to see the amazing rock formations – keep to the right of the visitor centre and walk through the bus underpass. You can then walk down to the rocks. Go really early, or on a stormy day if you want to avoid the crowds.
- Long queues are possible at the Carrick-A-Rede rope bridge, and don't expect a nerve-jangling rickety old thing any more. There was no HSE when it was built, so the original single rope hand-rail has been replaced with a safer, though still exciting bridge over the 23m deep, 20m wide chasm.
- The Causeway Coastal Route (or Antrim Coast road, otherwise known as the A2) is easy to follow by the brown signs. Watch out for the odd turn off to enjoy it at its best.
- Leathemstown is a great place to watch the racing (and comes recommended by ex-Ulster GP competitor Alan Cathcart). Parking is included in your £25 wrist-band price (unlike at the less-exciting start/finish area). If you pay £10 to use the grandstand you have a very wide view, but get there early or pre-book your seat. The huge TV screen only works on Saturday, and if you are on a grandstand, try to get right at the back so you can stand up. Grab some cardboard from a skip near the burger bar to weave into the grandstand railings as a windbreak. Take your own food, unless you enjoy queues!
- Lindsay hairpin should be another good viewing point. Don't imagine that you can just find a verge and watch for free – the areas are well controlled.
- You can move around the course between races, but for the most freedom, stay on the outside of the track before the roads are closed.
- For a night out in Belfast, the Cathedral Quarter is a bustling, lively environment.
- If you need a cab, call Stevie on 07938 536884 – one of the most accommodating and friendly taxi drivers we've ever met.
- Mark's Dad organised the trip, and used NuttTravel.com (028 7035 1199), who booked our ferry crossing, accommodation at the lovely Caldham House (028 9442 2378) for three nights, and our race passes, all for £190 each.

The rider

BRUCE WILSON

Bruce is MSL's deputy editor. An experienced road-tester, he's ridden almost every bike built in the last 10 years and many more besides. At the weekends you'll find him competing in endurance races (and winning) with his brother, or just pottering around the UK's roads.



The bike

BMW R1200R SPORT EXCLUSIVE

Cost new:
£11,700

Performance:
125bhp, 92lb-ft

Wet weight:
231kg

Tank size:
18 litres

Seat height:
790mm

This month

Miles: 415

In total: 3642

Average mpg:
48.6

Highlights: Even better fuel economy

Lowlights: Knowing our time together is coming to an end

Miles better

A new screen and some fresh tyres have made Bruce's BMW even better.

Last month I rounded off with the alluring thought of changing a few bits on the Beemer. In truth, I've been pretty impressed with the raw package of the model, but that didn't stop me taking a peek at the huge range of goodies BMW produces for the R1200R; check out the model's accessories on www.bmw-motorrad.co.uk.

From engine spoilers to multiple seat options, adjustable footrests to an Akrapovič sports silencer, the bolt-on options for this bike are really impressive. If I owned it, I wouldn't be able to help myself from whipping out the credit card and going on a bit of a spending spree, but with only a few months left with the 'R' in my garage, I thought it wiser to improve the bike practically, rather than aesthetically.

On longer journeys, often meaning long stints of motorway, the naked bike's lack of wind protection has been a bit of a bind. It came to me with a short 'Sport' screen fitted, which has been perfect for blasting around on my more local rides. But I was curious to

see how much the bike's protection levels could be enhanced, which prompted me to order in the 'High' windscreen option (priced at £186).

It fitted a doddle, simply requiring four screws to be removed from the existing screen and a few grommets to be pressed into place on the new scratchproof plastic, before tightening it all back up again. The £35.50 bracket's the same for both screen options, so you don't have to buy a second mounting plate if you fancy both screen heights in your life.

While I can't deny I prefer the look of the 'Sport' screen, I much favour the protection of the taller and wider 'High' screen. At quicker speeds, it definitely reduces the amount of wind pressure hitting your chest. My helmet still feels pretty exposed, but it would on any naked. I've not tested it on any really long journeys yet, but I'm pretty sure I'm going to be a lot more comfortable in the future.

The other change I've made this month is to the bike's tyres. The Michelin Pilot 4s fitted as standard have been awesome in all kinds of weather and temperatures. They've warmed up quickly, given good feedback and I've never once had any moments on them. I like their profiles, too, which seem to complement the Beemer's stable handling by rolling predictably into corners.



The Michelins have worn well.

With the best part of 4000 miles to their name, they're not in a terrible state and are probably good for a few thousand miles more, before they start squaring off too much. But with time against me, I'm keen to experience the BMW with some new shoes fitted. Having recently tested a bike with Pirelli's Angel GTs on-board, and being really impressed by their performance, I've opted to try a set out. They have plenty of tread on show, so I'm hoping they'll be a good choice for the predictable wet and cold weather that comes to play each autumn.

Other than that everything else on the bike's the same. I like the R1200R so much I can't think of what else I'd want to add that could genuinely improve it. It's got all the power I want, the handling's bob-on and it's proven more than comfortable enough for me, especially so with the new screen in place. One other interesting thing to note is how improved my economy's become. More recently, I've been averaging tanks between 48-51mpg. That's a huge improvement on where the bike was at when I first got it, though I don't feel as though I'm riding it any differently. I guess the Boxer's finally bedded itself in. Happy days.





Ben's a fan of the Tiger switchgear.

The rider

BEN MILLER

An ex-national level racer, Ben has been a keen biker since the age of 10, when he took up motocross. Since then he's gone on to own a string of track race bikes and commuters for the road.



Something for everyone

Can a Tiger be a sports bike? Ben's mind is made up...

The more time I spend with the Hinckley firm's middleweight adventure bike, the more I find myself appreciating just how good it really is. I've covered 426 miles this month returning an average of 44.8mpg, which brings my total mileage over the past four months to 1845 and in all honesty I'm struggling to find faults with Triumph's latest Tiger.

I could get picky with the odd little thing – the mirrors being the most obvious; although they are perfectly functional and offer good visibility, they happen to look something of an afterthought to me. I find this really surprising as the finish of the rest of the bike is nothing less than you would expect from good old British engineering.

I believe that you can tell a lot about a bike by the quality of the switchgear – some machines look and feel like they've been thrown together using cheap materials and with little consideration for anything else other than build costs. Thankfully the Tiger

really does give the appearance that no expense has been spared on the use of quality components, and if the designers had given the mirrors that little more thought, and been a little more creative in ensuring they complemented the rugged styling of the bike, they'd have given me very little to criticise.

Some of you may remember from the first feature with my long term test bike, that I was looking to answer a fundamental question that I had for myself. Keeping my racing background in mind and previously being an outright sports bike man, I wanted to find out if a bike like the Tiger could whet the appetite of even the most hardened sports bike enthusiasts. Only time would tell and now I've racked up some miles I feel that the Tiger has answered my question entirely.

I've been blown away by how capable this bike is; it's plenty quick enough for not only the mundane squirt to work but also for a blast out with your mates on a Sunday morning. It's agile enough to enable you to carve

up some decent B-roads... and even more so since swapping to the Metzeler Tourance Next rubber, which has helped inspire some serious peg-down fun. The gearbox is heavenly, providing some silky-smooth changes; you can flick through each ratio in quick succession, thanks to the fact that the motor shares the selector mechanism directly from the Daytona.

Yet together with all of these sporty compliments, it's completely practical, beautifully comfortable and so unbelievably easy to ride. So in answer to my question – yes, it's absolutely superb for those who want to have some fun, just maybe in a more grown up manner.

I'm 28 years old so I'd place myself well below the average age of most adventure bike riders. Some of my more sports-obsessed riding mates might not understand (yet) but if I had the money, I'd have one of these parked in my garage alongside my Street Triple. And in all honesty I'd probably find myself reaching for the Tiger's keys more often.

The bike

TRIUMPH TIGER 800 XRx

Cost new: £9499

Performance:
93bhp, 58lb-ft

Wet weight:
216kg

Tank size: 19
litres

Seat height:
810-830mm

This month

Miles: 426

Miles in total:
1845

Average mpg:
44.8

Highlights this month: Enjoying almost every mile

Lowlights this month: Filtering with panniers when caught in traffic

Tony's back on track

It's back to the roots for the Suzuki GSX-S1000 as he takes on Silverstone's short circuit...

Over the past few weeks with the big Suzuki, I kept asking myself THE question. Well, I say THE question like that because this is a very close sibling to arguably the greatest track lineage of motorcycles ever; the GSX-Rs.

So yeah, THE question will do to describe the one thing I was left really wanting to know about this bike – how it'd behave on track. After all, it's an excellent road-going motorcycle, but life on the road (and the various elements you need to incorporate into a bike to make it so manageable on pot-holed Tarmac) doesn't always mean that the same motorcycle is going to be fun on circuit.

It often means that the bike is too safe, too lacklustre, for fun. In the effort to calm down 1000cc of prime beef so it's manageable on road a factory can sometimes smooth things out way too much, or leave you with dozens of electronic systems to attempt to disable.

With the Suzuki – I'm delighted to say – things aren't quite like that. Firstly, it's two-switch-easy to turn off the electronic aids. Secondly, all that liveliness and energy that's just-in-

touch reachable on the road romps into each session on track.

The chassis is great at pace. Predictable and solid, but small and flickable. It feels like a 600 on the move. The riding position's roominess that saves a lot of pain on the road is, in reality, too roomy when you're on track, so you have to wedge yourself into the bike more than you would normally, otherwise you slide about around the seat.

Fuelling is very instant on the track – ideal. I've mentioned that other riders have picked up on the fuelling – criticising it – but I am now more sure of saying that there is very little wrong here. Yep, it's a bit snatchy but so what? This is a GSX-R in all but name, it SHOULD be slightly aggressive and hard-edged.

Engine-wise the motor may 'only' have 143bhp but it's enough. I could hold onto the back of 2015 Yamaha R1s and GSX-R1000s without stress down Silverstone's back straight, and the punch out of the turns was only marginally slower than the more pure race-bred bikes. Impressive throughout.

For me there are three things that niggle about this bike on track:

1 The footrests go down way too early (its lean angle is limited by the height of the pegs for the relaxed riding position); 2 The riding position and high bars turn you into a sail unless you're licking the paint off the tank; 3 The brakes seem vague at full pressure when compared to the GSX-R, and I don't know why – I assume it's a combination of hard braking and the 'sail' effect of popping up into the wind when hard on the brakes at high speed. It's the same brakes on the road and race bikes, after all.

But none of those niggles are serious enough to put a dampener on the sheer fun of riding the big S on track. It's sharp, responsive and pure fun. I didn't finish a lap without a screaming urge to do another.

On top of that you can factor in this – I put the TomTom Rider 400 sat-nav on the bike in the morning, rode for a couple of hours along some nicely wiggly roads, then headed to the track, got there and rode all day on circuit and then rode back home. On the same bike, in comfort and without issue.

For £9.5k that's a helluva thing to say. And I can't think of a bike I'd have had as much fun on doing a similar thing. Track box ticked. Awesome.

The rider

TONY CARTER

Former editor of MSL and now looking after our sister paper *Motor Cycle Monthly*, along with website MoreBikes.co.uk, Tony's been riding almost 30 years. He currently owns a Suzuki RG250 and a Yamaha YZR500 replica.



The bike

SUZUKI GSX-S1000A

Cost new: £9499

Performance:

143.5bhp, 78lb-ft

Wet weight: 209kg

Tank size: 17 litres

Seat height: 810mm

This month

Miles: 383

Miles in total: 884

Average mpg: 52

Highlights this month: Brilliant track fun PLUS road manners

Lowlights this month: Can't think of one (too roomy a seat for serious track riding... erm...)





The rider

STEVE ROSE

Steve Rose has been riding for 32 years and still gets far too giddy about every motorcycle he rides; "The best bike in the world is the last one I rode." Worrying then that he was senior road tester on the UK's two biggest motorcycle monthlies. Owns a 1991 Yamaha TDR250, currently scanning eBay for a Yamaha FZR1000R, MZ TS150 or a 1980s chopper called Feline Fantasy.



Vee-Four Velocity

It may not look it but Steve's discovered that his VFR800 is actually the perfect executive sled.

M eet my new office... the 2015 Honda VFR800. As an office it's rubbish; no water cooler, no constantly-updating laptop, no witty colleagues or preening alpha males. No cup holders, no sat nav, no Bluetooth or massage-seats. Crazy.

Apparently we no longer need to go to meetings in Weybridge, Colnbrook, Bourne End and Hinckley. Some new-fangled technology called Face-Skype or some such means we can spend even longer sat in front of a screen, and talk to marketing people in the Home Counties while scratching our out-of-sight hairy-dudes beneath the table. Doing this saves on the requirement to queue in a car for eight hours, to take part in a two hour meeting, drink over-priced coffee and crash on the way home through exhaustion.

I have a better suggestion. Buy a VFR800 and get to the meetings in record time instead. My working life currently consists of many meetings in some Counties a long way from Home. A long and very dull plod from Wolds to Woking made considerably more entertaining by the addition of Honda's VTEC.

The VFR is brilliant on these long slogs. The seat stays comfy for three hours, it does an easy 200 miles per tank and is as accomplished slicing through traffic as it is in stealth mode being fast and polite when the traffic thins.

To relieve the boredom on the many motorway miles, I've developed a new game through the variable speed limit zones – those gantried sections of road that seem to cover half the network these days. In rush hour they genuinely seem to keep the traffic flowing which is brilliant, but most of the time that I'm in them the traffic has vanished but the lights are still on – a bit like setting the timer to run too late on your central heating. I find these stretches dangerous.

My concentration drops away really quickly, so I've developed a solution... Drop down to second gear – keeping the engine just above where the VTEC kicks in – and accelerate away from the gantry as fast as I possibly can. The aim is to hit full throttle in at least two gears before braking as hard as I dare as the next one approaches. I haven't managed it yet mainly because the VFR's throttle cable seems to have been designed for a bike with a

throttle twice the diameter. One full rotation of my wrist is nowhere near enough to get there.

Which is all a bit pointless anyway because the quick-revving motor is bouncing off the redline way before I get close. It's a great game though – you'll be surprised how rapidly this sports tourer accelerates when asked rudely, and even more surprised how quickly it stops when there's a gantry approaching.

But more than that, it's the stability on the brakes that really impresses. A combination of good suspension set-up, smart geometry that allows quick steering and stability, plus a simple-but-effective ABS system for back up. I used to actively dislike Honda's linked CBS brakes, but the latest versions, linked to ABS, are superb.

The other surprise with all this silliness is that I'm still averaging more than 50mpg. All this straight lining is taking its toll on the tyres though. The OE Dunlops are starting to flatten off in the middle, which makes corners a lot less fun than before. I've just ordered a set of Pirelli Angel GTs to replace them. Hopefully they'll be fitted and scrubbed in by next week.

The bike

HONDA VFR800

Price: £10,499

Performance: 105bhp, 55lb-ft

Wet weight: 239kg

Seat height: 789/809mm

Tank size: 21.5 litres

This month

Miles: 341

In total: 2386

Average mpg: 51

Highlights: Styling, engine, comfort, chassis, economy (is that enough highlights?)

Lowlights: Finish not as special as some previous VFRs

The rider

JAMES ROBINSON

Editor of *The Classic MotorCycle* magazine, 36-year-old James passed his test in 1996, and has ridden and owned a wide range of bikes, spanning more than a century. The stable currently includes a 1992 Ducati 750SS, 1937 Velocette KTS, 1930 Sunbeam Model 9 and 1928 Rex-Acme TT8, among others...



The bike

DUCATI SCRAMBLER CLASSIC

Cost new: £8130

Performance: 74bhp, 50lb-ft

Wet weight: 186kg

Tank size: 13.5 litres

Seat height: 790mm

This month

Miles: 800

In total: 1866

Average mpg: 52

Highlights this month: A clear run along a nice bit of the A66

Lowlights this month: The numb bum after a couple of hours

Touring times

The ideal machine for a 480 mile round trip? Well, no, but of course it coped.



The first thing I quickly came to realise as I prepared the Scrambler for a weekend jaunt up to Scotland, was that there is a distinct lack of anything to secure my tail pack to. I was already travelling as light as I feasibly could for three days away, and even with that it was a struggle.

The problem is there are no hooks or anything similar – I ended up with a bit of a bodge job, which included managing to get some straps stuffed under the seat/rear mudguard, as well as utilising the indicators, the pillion footrests and even the bottom of the number plate as bungee anchors. Still, it all went in place and seemed

reasonably secure before heading off to the Scottish borders.

As usual (see last month) my departure was celebrated with another soaking, being wet before I'd even made it up to the M180 where I called in to see a friend. I brimmed the petrol tank there, too, before setting off westwards, then upwards and onto the A1.

Traffic was horrendous, and with the rain it was rapidly becoming a not-too-pleasant experience. Still, I was keeping warm and dry and cruising comfortably at a sensible motorway speed. I stopped at services a couple of times for a warming cuppa, and had a chat with a nice Bandit-owning Geordie guy who was stood next to me in the coffee queue; he clocked my riding gear and deduced I was on the Scrambler.

Things started to get more miserable around Scotch Corner, as the traffic ground to a halt. The services were rammed, too, and chaos seemed to be the order of the day. That was nothing though compared to the A66; traffic was at a standstill. Luckily the Scrambler is small, nimble and easy to handle at low speed, so I was able to swerve my way through much of the traffic.

The problem was that the carriageway was already down to single

lanes, then there had been a breakdown too. Eventually, I got to the front of the hold-up and snuck through. From there on, the ride improved immeasurably in fact the sun even came out. As I headed into Dumfries the skies darkened again, but I made it in dry weather. Just.

The weekend was spent with friends, and we enjoyed several rides in the borders area; my pal Duncan was out on his Vincent twin and it was nice to compare the two Vees, built 65 odd years apart, though (yet again) we took the obligatory soaking.

Come Sunday, and it was time to ride home. This time traffic was sparse and I set off at a brisk pace, zipping along happily. Once out of Scotland and across the A66 (which is actually a pretty nice road, if the traffic is kind), we were soon back on the A1, tramping south. But this lack of stop, starts and interruptions, while a boon to progress, wasn't so good on my backside.

Gradually, the Duke got more and more uncomfortable, until at one point I was getting really desperate to get off and move position. A 20 minute stop though, and we were back in the game.

So although the Scrambler is no tourer, it's able to deal with it. You can't say fairer than that.



Two V-twins, with a lot of history between them...



The rider

ROGER JONES

Sixty-nine-year-old Roger Jones has been riding since he was 16 – first on a two-stroke Royal Enfield 150cc Prince. He's owned 52 bikes, including an R100RS that he bought new in 1977 and still owns. He joined the International Motorcyclist Tour Club at the same time, and still travels around 8000 miles a year. In 1984 he rode 970 miles in a day; back from the Austrian GP on a 1984 K100RS.



Lincolnshire's magnificent seven

Roger leads the charge on the KTM with a group ride out in Lincolnshire...

As a long-term member of the International Motorcyclists Tour Club (IMTC), I was delighted to be leading a day out... A meet was organised at Nocton Heath Café, just south of Lincoln for a 140 mile ride around some of the area's quieter roads, most of which I have to say were minor, with many having grass growing up in the middle. Superb for the KTM with its long suspension travel.

When any run is posted in the monthly IMTC mag, the organisers always wonder just what the turnout will be. Fortunately the weather was kind, and a total of seven bikes met for a 10.30am start. Another machine turned up from Sheffield, but just joined us for breakfast.

Due to risk assessments now having to be completed for regional ride outs, the days have sadly passed when aimless runs, led by our hearts, were possible. Prior to the day the pre-runs were done; one about a month beforehand and a second a week prior, to ensure that no roads had been resurfaced or closed.

Breakfast over, we set off south of Sleaford for a ride north to the Wolds. After some 50 miles the attending bikes had their suspension tested by

doing the 'Wasps Nest' loop – yes there is a village (well three houses and a farm) called Wasps Nest – give it a try if you're in the area; it's off the B1190 Bardney to Lincoln road. The loop is of the undulating 30mph comfort suspension testing type, as opposed to the smoother and faster A-road test – I make this point as one of the guys was on his Honda CBR600 – he also owns a Goldwing and a BMW 1200GS; I bet he was cursing me!

While on the subject of other machines, it was interesting to find that a total of 18 bikes were owned by the seven participating riders. The average age was 61, and three of us were just one year shy of the big seven-oh. But I digress. The lunch stop – in picnic style – was taken at Willingham Woods, near Market Rasen – an ideal break as toilets and refreshments are available. It's a popular Lincolnshire bike meet that attracts upwards of 500 machines on any sunny Wednesday evening.

Picnic over and a short one hour ride around the Wolds saw us conclude at a café in South Willingham where ice cream, coffee and cakes were enjoyed.

The KTM rarely runs at such a sedate pace – I normally find myself riding a lot faster than I did on this trip – but it proved to be entirely suitable on this jaunt thanks to its all-day comfort, luggage capacity, visibility and fuelling – it excelled at the Wasps Nest of course. And with that well-controlled fuel management system, it even managed 54mpg on the day.

After saying my farewells to the group I hacked home on my own. Over some 35 miles, the mpg dropped to 42, so I certainly appeared to have upped the pace somewhat. Okay, it'll mean me reaching into my pocket a little more at the pump, but who cares? It nicely blew the cobwebs away and made my day's ride even more memorable.



A few of the IMTC magnificent...

The bike

KTM 1290 SUPER ADVENTURE

Cost new:

£15,999

Performance:

160bhp, 103lb-ft

Wet weight:

249kg

Tank size:

30 litres

Seat height:

860mm

This month

Miles: 730

In total: 4980

Average mpg: 45

Highlights: Every ride in the dry

Lowlights:

Keeping other testers' hands off the KTM



Joe's love for the Suzuki can beat this folly...

The rider

JOE DICK

Photographer Joe Dick has been into bikes since was an ankle-biter. Riding his first motorcycle not long after he learnt to walk, he's ridden (and raced) a wide-range of bikes, though he'll admit to preferring a lower seat, being 5ft 5in tall.



It's turning into a love thing...

A brief affair with a sportier model makes Joe see what he really has in the V-Strom...

The big eye-opener over the last few weeks has actually been from not riding the V-Strom. First impressions of the new Yamaha R1M went along the lines of, 'Crikey, this thing is amazing... and fast'. Tech galore and power to spin the earth backwards, it really is a great machine.

But in order to try the Yamaha, I had to go and get it. Riding the V-Strom in my Furygan Apex one-piece leathers wasn't the comfiest proposition on the upright adventure machine, but it wasn't so uncomfortable that I wanted to get off. In fact, once again the Suzuki proved itself in comfort, and getting off ended up as one of the last things I wanted to do, especially when upon arrival, the little 650 had returned 61.8 mpg... I've not seen a return like that in pretty much anything I've ever ridden or driven. It's worth mentioning that it wasn't the steadiest ride either. Suzuki

claims the bike is capable of over 70mpg and now I can believe it. Practical, fun and cheap to run, this bike just gets better.

Yes, granted the R1M was everything you'd expect from the pinnacle of Yamaha sports bikes, and by heck did I enjoy my time with it; at 26 years old you'd think that I'd never want to give it back.

On the one hand, I definitely didn't. A 200bhp bike sat in the garage for a blow-out after a busy week, something to show off to the boys down the pub, or even just to have it so I can sit and stare at... it's something I could definitely live with.

But after a while it was rather apparent that I've become used to the world of practicality to a greater degree than I thought. While the Yam was more than capable of returning an mpg in the mid 40s, I couldn't help but think that for every 120 miles I did on the R1M, I could have done 180 on the

V-Strom. After all, I'm married now, and those extra £s saved could go towards a new kitchen for the wife, because that's more important than bikes, apparently.

In addition to that, I have to say that once I put my leg back over the Suzuki after being cramped up and holding on to what felt like 10 raging bulls, my little V-Strom put a massive smile on my face. I could ride without having my arms ripped off – or my head blown off unless I was tucked in – and I got to my destination feeling delightfully spritely rather than needing a snooze. Or a change of underwear.

All in all, how can I possibly dislike this amazing Suzuki? Some people would pick at little bits here and there on finish and suchlike, but you really can't have a pop when it's a sub-£8k bike that delivers such a big bang for the buck, and economy that rivals most others.

The bike

SUZUKI V-STROM 650 XT

Cost new: £7599

Performance:
68bhp, 44lb-ft

Wet weight:
215kg

Tank size: 20
litres

Seat height:
835mm

This month

Miles: 781

In Total: 2378

Average mpg: 52

Highlights:
Getting out and riding something I wouldn't even think of

Lowlights: Not getting to ride it more



Easy does it

A month of crawling about and drinking coffee for Julie and the sporty KTM.

This month has been a slow one – literally. With less time on my hands than usual, rides out on the lovely KTM have been limited to short runs around my home county of Lincolnshire and lots of café hopping for mugs of delicious cappuccinos.

You'd think that living within spitting distance of Skegvegas (aka Skegness) and Mablethorpe would be a good thing, with easy access to nice roads, fresh air, sea, sand and chips. But it definitely has its drawbacks. It seems that during August the whole population is driving through Lincolnshire on their way to happy family time in the, er, sun. And most are dragging caravans and trailers behind their four wheeled fancies.

So faced with nose to tail traffic at every turn, which of course included the usual slow moving farm monsters, it seemed a good opportunity to test out the KTM's manoeuvrability and some slow speed riding. We've been faced with bank holiday queues as long as any seen on the M25, towns brimming with sat-nav focused tourists and the 'let's drive slow'

brigade who don't really seem to care if there's a bike hurtling towards them; they're still pulling out of the junction and damn the consequences.

The KTM has coped pretty well. The lightweight and slim beauty (the bike, not me) is capable of squeezing through the smallest of gaps and is quick and reactive when needed. Slow speeds are a little trickier as it's just not built for this. And around town, when precision steering is required, you're very quickly reminded that sports bikes really are much more suited to open roads and track days.

When queuing is unavoidable, the cooling fan is very eager to come on, which is actually pretty noisy on this bike. All the stopping and starting is quite heavy on the wrists too, due to the riding position and, as the brake and clutch levers are a bit of a stretch for me, a good dose of 'please don't make me change gear again' pain was felt on most trips.

I still find this bike a little too tall, but I'm seeking ways of dealing with this that generally involve the one foot on the kerb trick when stopping, or leaning off the bike slightly if there are no kerbs to help; it's a good job it's so

light. I've never been great at stopping with only one foot down which is what I know I should be doing (as I'm reminded on every rider assessment course I ever do) preferring instead to have both feet firmly planted, so this has been a challenge for me. I've found myself crawling up to lights and roundabouts in the hope that I won't have to stop, although I realise this is a habit I have to break!

This is a bike that I've really had to learn to ride – it's easy in many ways but quite a challenge too. Still, I always arrive home with a big smile on my face no matter what – you can't ask for more than that.



The racing kit would look great, but it wouldn't get Julie to Skegvegas any quicker.

The rider

JULIE BROWN

Magazine publisher Julie Brown passed her test in 1995 and has ridden a plethora of different bikes since then. Cruising across America on a Harley, blasting around the Dales on a sports bike, city riding on a moped; Julie is happy on two wheels no matter what the bike or how fast or slow the speed.



The bike

KTM RC390

Cost new: £4998

Performance: 43bhp, 26lb-ft

Wet weight: 165kg

Tank size: 10 litres

Seat height: 820mm

This month

Miles: 156

In total: 2422

Average mpg: 66

Highlights: My technique in traffic has definitely improved this month

Lowlights: Caravans – enough said!

Held Tortosa jacket & Arese trousers

TESTED BY: John Milbank | £499.99 & £329.99 | www.held-uk.co.uk | 01423 790121



Air is carried around the jacket via a clever vent system.



The back has a 3D mesh, which keeps you more comfortable.



Trousers fasten securely, and have an adjustable 'belt' built in.



The pants have a nonslip Pittards leather panel on the bum.

I've had this Held kit for 18 months now, and while there have been glitches along the way, I'm very impressed with it – more so than with any other textile gear I've used in 16 years of bike testing. It's covered me in England, Ireland, Scotland, the Isle of Man, France, Belgium, Spain and Luxembourg. But it's not the waterproofing that's made me so happy, it's the fact that it doesn't stick to me when I'm hot.

Last year I went on a touring holiday with my mates to Scotland – surprisingly the first couple of days were really hot. Too hot for textiles. But with the jacket's two pairs of large, zipped vents front and rear I was able to keep the air flowing around my jacket and venting out through the hem, which it does while maintaining the waterproofing as the membrane is deeper inside.

I had the buttons undone and the storm flap open, which exposes two full-height vents that also force the air beneath the outer lining. At speed, I ballooned a little, but I didn't care – I was very comfortable. The breathable mesh CoolMax lining stops the arms sticking as you take the jacket off in the heat (something that's driven me wild with poorer quality gear in the past), and the back uses a 3D mesh, which keeps the back-protector (if you fit one, sadly it's not included) away from you, to further help ventilation.

The jacket and trousers come with excellent quality liners, but I've rarely used them; I run quite hot so in the winter tend to just throw an extra

fleece on, as I like to be able to remove it easily if I start to cook. That's not a criticism of the Held liners – it's just what I always do. Normal people will no doubt use them more.

In the rain they're also very good, but to say I've never got wet would be a lie. One or two times, I've had a damp belly

in severe downpours, but for every time that's happened, there have been several more similar

situations during which I've kept dry. I've come to the conclusion that it simply depends on how carefully I dress myself. If I take the time to get the two zipped together and settled correctly, as well as ensuring the

storm flap is properly positioned, then I stay dry.

I don't totally trust the jacket's waterproof outer pockets – I've too often found that water can creep under the flap – but there are three zipped and one elasticated inside, so it's not a big issue. Equally, while I've kept my wallet in the zipped trouser pockets during very severe rainstorms, it has got damp, so it's best tucked away.

I've had the jacket's main zip toggle break, which was very easy to replace myself. One of the sleeve toggles also snapped, but the jacket had to be returned for the whole zip to be replaced (you'd never know, and keeping it cleaner would have prevented this). Both were covered by the warranty – two years as standard, five years if you fill in the supplied QuattroTempi club card (which also gives other perks like free gifts and invites).

I'm 5ft 10in with a 36in waist with a 32in leg – this meant XL trousers, but I found that they were just a touch long, leaving my knee armour slightly low.

Fortunately the KXL size has a shorter leg, which gives the perfect sizing for me, and along with a Large jacket, means I'm always comfortable and secure, whatever the weather.

It's been washed, it's still waterproof, and it's got many more thousands of miles of use left in it. It's a very significant expense, but with the five year guarantee, and the quality of performance it's given me so far, this Held gear is a very good investment. MSLNOV0100





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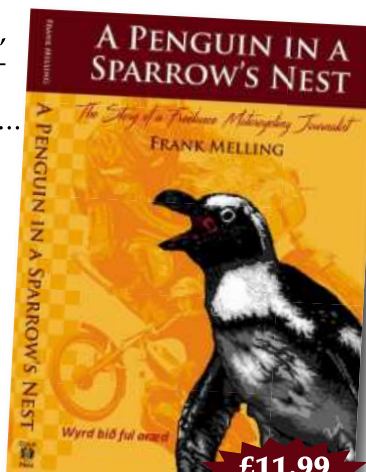
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TESTED BY: John Milbank | £20 | www.sharprider.co.uk | 01777 818013



ABOVE LEFT: MSL reader Tim Gunn gained a great deal from the course. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Wendy Neil has covered 25,000 miles in three years, but still took a lot away from the first day's practical lessons.

Subsidised by local government, SharpRider courses are held in Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire and South Yorkshire. The training takes place over two days; the first predominantly in the classroom, with some closed area practical tuition, and the other out on the road.

This incredible value course is aimed at anyone who's just passed their test, is upgrading to a more powerful bike, is returning after a break, or simply wants to check or improve their standard. You can become a better rider, and reduce your insurance premiums, with training based on the Driving Standards Agency Enhanced Rider scheme delivered by qualified DSA trainers.

The class-based tuition does a good job of covering the most common gaps in bikers' knowledge. Wendy Neil has put 25,000 miles on her Aprilia Pegaso Strada in just three years, but still enjoyed the course: "There's a lot of little hints and tips that I've been scribbling in my note book – it's a lot to take in. There are things I've really got to practice

– I've done BikeSafe, and saw this as part of my career progression. I'm planning on taking both the IAM and RoSPA courses next, though not at the same time!"

The aim of SharpRider was described as making bikers 'unconsciously competent'. There's a good mix of discussion between the tutors and the students, some well illustrated guides to road positioning and safety, and a fantastic set of videos – some of which started with us proclaiming the idiocy of other drivers, and ended with us realising the key mistakes the riders themselves had made.

There was even a very interesting insight into transactional analysis – the idea that you can be in any of three ego states; you can act as a parent, an adult or a child. A parent is the sum total of everything you've learned; all your prejudices and generally being judgemental. An adult is rational, enquiring and will want to ask questions. A child is all the fun, and all the uncontained emotion. What type of biker do you think you are?

MSL reader and MT-09 owner Tim Gunn was also on the course, and spoke to us after he'd completed the on-road tuition: "Course leader and tutor Mike Abbott's friendly and professional manner really put me at ease as we started the two hour ride. The trip covered fast dual-carriageway, town riding, and a variety of rural roads, with a couple of stops in between for progress updates.

"We also stopped at a quiet 'no through road', where Mike watched me carry out several controlled stops from 50-60mph, before a verbal assessment of the afternoon's ride.

"Mike was patient, encouraging and great company throughout; all of his excellent advice promotes safe and enjoyable motorcycling. I learnt a huge amount during the session, particularly regarding road positioning, cornering and keeping

a 'cocoon' of safety space by being aware of other road users around.

"I rode home in very heavy traffic, but feeling a better and more confident rider. As well as being a superb professional, I now think of Mike as a motorcycling friend, and was particularly pleased to receive a very complimentary email from Mike the next day, together with a list of riding suggestions. I was also delighted to receive an 'Enhanced Rider' certificate Grade B, which can help reduce my insurance costs by 15%.

"I would highly recommend this course to any motorcyclist – experienced or otherwise – and feel I have benefitted enormously from it."

You can never have too much bike training, whatever level you're currently at, and at just £20, you'd be daft not to take advantage of SharpRider.



Rock Oil Dirtblaster

TESTED BY: Bruce Wilson | £5.99 (1 litre) | www.rockoil.co.uk | 01925 636191

Cleaning bikes isn't something I look forward to, but Rock Oil's Dirtblaster has helped to ease that otherwise painful experience. It's fantastic at removing dirt, flies and oils with very little effort. Spray it on, leave it to soak and then wipe the worst of the crud away. Ideally, a blast over with a pressure washer achieves the best results, although in my experience I've been left with a white film on plastics post spray, though I should probably wash it off a bit sooner. Like I said, I'm no fan of this chore. All the same, for dirt removal, and especially bugs, this stuff is really great. It's also good to note that it's biodegradable and environmentally friendly, just in case you were wondering.

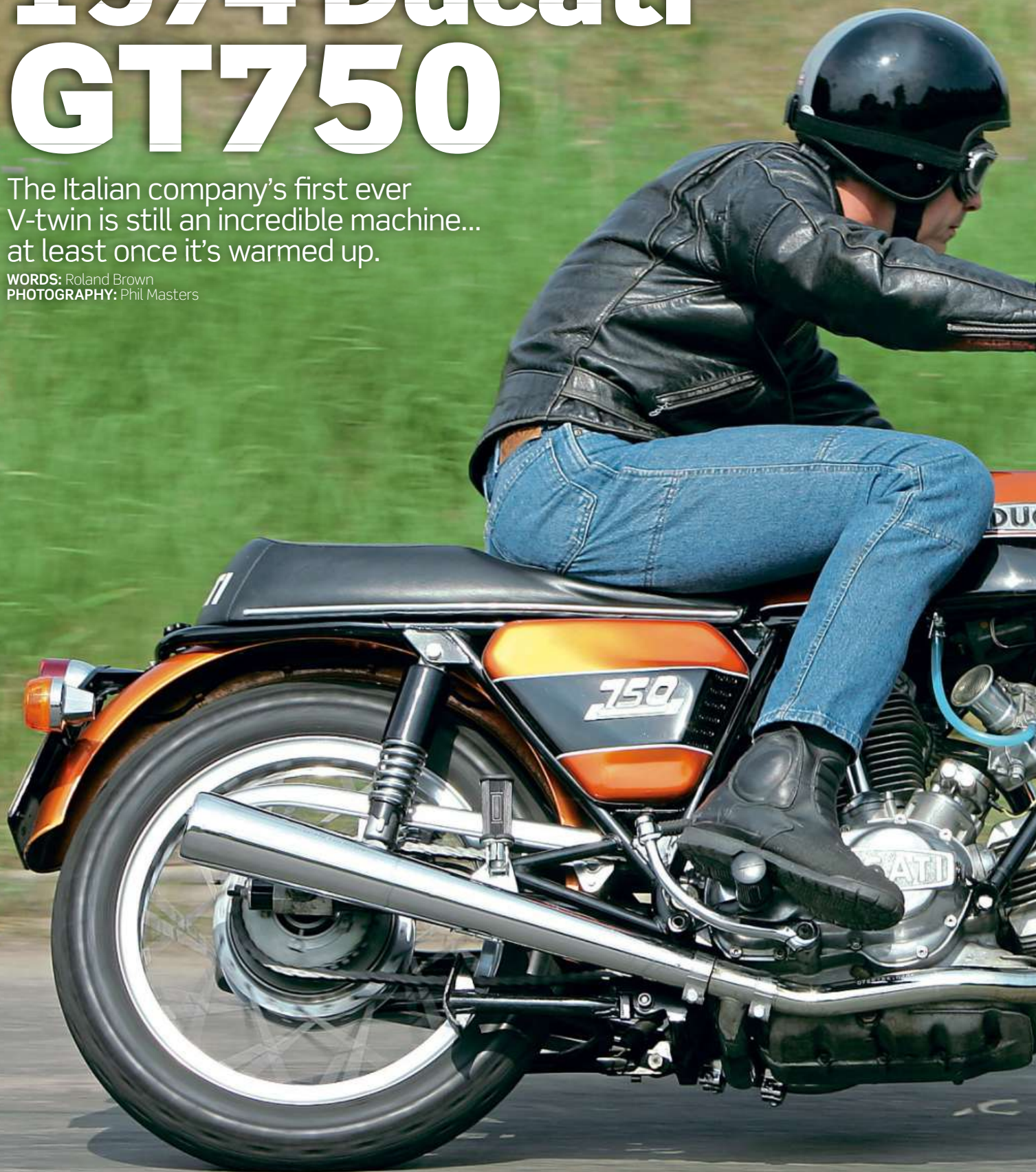


Classic test

1974 Ducati GT750

The Italian company's first ever V-twin is still an incredible machine... at least once it's warmed up.

WORDS: Roland Brown
PHOTOGRAPHY: Phil Masters



really shouldn't have been surprised at just how good this Ducati GT750 was. After all, as a teenager in the 1970s I'd admired and lusted after those big Bolognese V-twins; read about them and dreamed about them, while riding around on a succession of much cheaper and less glamorous Japanese and British machines.

Since then I've been lucky enough to ride numerous classic Ducatis, and not one has been a disappointment.

But the brilliance of the GT750 – the first of the Ducati V-twin line – still came as a surprise. Simply looking around this immaculate bevel-drive twin was a treat; admiring its stylish orange-and-black paintwork, its period badges, and the lines of that big air-cooled engine with its cooling fins going off in all directions and its attractive, rounded alloy crankcases. Sitting astride the firmly padded seat and firing up the motor with a lazy kick to send the slender Conti pipes barking out their uniquely tuneful sound...

But after finally riding away on what, after all, was the first and least powerful of the twins, I was stunned to discover that it was not just respectably rapid but torquey, stable, bursting with character and most of all wonderfully enjoyable to ride. After 20 minutes I was severely tempted to turn round, head straight back to

Made In Italy boss John Fallon and make him an offer to buy it (before the thought of mortgage payments, my more mundane motorcycling needs, and the commitment needed to keep an old Ducati on top form brought me sadly to my senses).

Perhaps my sense of surprise at how good the GT was came because such is the reputation of more famous models such as the 750 Sport, 750SS, 900SS and

others that followed it, I'd subconsciously assumed that the basic 748cc V-twin that began the line was relatively ordinary. It was overshadowed by the more glamorous sports models, and presumably had some teething problems or at least some minor design flaws that made it less than desirable all these years later?

But nothing could be further from the truth. On the contrary, the GT750 with which Ducati's design genius Fabio Taglioni introduced the V-twin line was not just a bold and innovative high-performance machine when introduced in 1971, it was also remarkably capable and well-sorted right from the word go. Apart from paint colour and a few relatively minor mods there was no difference between this late-model GT, which was built in 1974, and the first machines off the Bologna production line in 1971.



From left: Fredmano Spairani, director of coordination; Cosimo Calcagnile, commercial director; Arnaldo Milvio CEO and Fabio Taglioni with the GT750 in 1971.





ABOVE: Rebuilds are now very expensive, with a crankshaft costing £2000.

BELOW RIGHT: The comfortable bar position made the GT a practical roadster.

Specification

DUCATI GT750 (1974)

Engine type: 748cc air-cooled sohc, 4-valve longitudinal 90° V-twin

Bore x stroke: 80 x 74.4mm

Compression ratio: 8.5:1

Carburation: 2 x 30mm Dell'Ortos (30mm Amal Concentrics on 1971 model)

Claimed power: 60bhp @ 8000rpm

Transmission: 5-speed

Electrics: 12v battery; 150W alternator

Frame: Tubular steel

Suspension: (F) 38mm Ceriani telescopic, no adjustment; (R) Twin Marzocchi shock absorbers, adj preload

Brakes: (F) Single 280mm disc

Rear brake: 203mm SLS drum; (R) 3.60 x 19in (Pirelli Phantom); (R) 4.10 x 18in (Pirelli Phantom)

Wheelbase: 1500mm

Seat height: 790mm

Fuel capacity: 17 litres

Weight: 185kg (dry)

Supplied by: Made In Italy Motorcycles, www.madeinitaly.com

WINNING PERFORMANCE

For a relatively small and financially struggling company such as Ducati to get things so right in the early 1970s was an impressive achievement. And a hugely significant one, too. It could be argued that, of all the hundreds of models that Ducati has produced since the marque began bike production in the mid-1940s, the model that started the V-twin line is the most important of all. As well as launching Ducati's superbike range in such style, and leading to so many other great roadsters, the GT was also the basis of vital racing success, most notably with Paul Smart's famous Imola 200 victory in 1972.

The GT was very much the work of Taglioni, who had joined Ducati from Mondial in 1954 in the all-powerful post of chief designer and technical director, at the age of just 34. As an engineering student at Bologna university six years earlier he had produced a design for a 250cc, 90° V4 with cylinders running in line of the bike.

At Ducati in the early 1960s, after revitalising the company with successful singles including the legendary 100cc Gran Sport, he adapted this V4 layout to create the mighty Apollo, which never reached production largely because its 1260cc engine was too powerful for contemporary tyres to handle.

Ducati had long been aiming to produce a twin, but not with cylinders in a Vee. The firm had raced parallel twins in the 1950s, and in the mid-1960s developed a succession of larger engined parallel twins, with the aim of creating a roadster to compete with dominant British models. But although a 500cc twin was displayed at the Daytona Show in the US in March 1965, neither that bike nor the 700cc prototype that followed two years later reached production. Meanwhile Honda launched the CB450 twin, whose arrival helped ensure that an improved 500cc Ducati parallel twin was met with little enthusiasm by the Italian firm's dealers in the vital US market. The project was abandoned.

By this time Ducati was in financial trouble, and in 1969 the firm was taken over by the Italian government. Honda had recently introduced the CB750 four, and fortunately Ducati's new management team not only saw the need for a 750cc model, but also realised that it needed to be something special rather than another parallel twin. Taglioni, whose stated design aim was "simplicity, carried out to its ultimate extreme", adapted his earlier V4 layout to create a V-twin, or more accurately an L-twin, that was essentially two 350cc singles on a common crankcase.

Ducati worked fast. Taglioni's design was finished by March 1970, the first engine was being tested four months later, and it was so impressive and trouble-free that by September a complete bike was ready to be unveiled to the press. By June 1971 it was in production: called the GT750 (also often referred to as the 750GT), and incorporating a few changes from that prototype, including flat bars instead of clip-ons, a 280mm Lockheed single front brake disc instead of a Fontana drum, 30mm Amal Concentric carbs instead of Dell'Ortos, and a reshaped tank and seat unit.

As well as being distinctive, the engine layout had obvious advantages of small frontal area and low centre of gravity. The 90° Vee angle gave perfect primary balance, while Taglioni's decision to raise the front cylinder by 15° from horizontal allowed good cooling to both pots while also helping exhaust routing and ground clearance. The effect of the L-motor's inevitable length was minimised by the way the front cylinder head fitted between the downtubes of the tubular steel frame.

Like the factory's well-proven singles, the V-twin featured bevel drive to a single overhead camshaft, wet sump layout, and an integral five-speed gearbox. The 748cc motor had conventional coil valve springs instead of the Desmo layout that Taglioni had already introduced on some racing singles, and produced a claimed 60bhp at 8000rpm. At 185kg dry the GT750 was 15kg heavier than the prototype, but considerably lighter than the 67bhp Honda CB750 four. That gave the GT a very impressive power-to-weight ratio back in 1971.

With its rider's chin on the tank the GT was good for a genuine 125mph that made it one of the world's fastest bikes in the early 1970s. And its handling, especially at high speed, was notably better than that of heavier Japanese multis such as the CB750, Suzuki's GT750 and Kawasaki's 500 and 750cc air-cooled triples. Right from this model – its first superbike – Ducati hit on the format of relatively light-weight, minimalist but rigid frame and fairly firm suspension that would make the marque's name a byword for handling excellence.

With just a single disc up front, the GT's braking ability didn't live up to its cornering performance. The other fork leg had lugs for a second disc but Ducati





never fitted one, though the factory did introduce a few updates on later versions, including this bike's centre-axle front forks (instead of the original leading-axle design), and the addition of an electric starter on the last bikes to leave the factory. There was also a GT750 USA model, with higher bars, and a police version with screen, pannier and single seat.

Production ended in late 1974, when the GT750 was replaced by the 860 GT, with its controversial angular styling. By this time the 750 had been hotbedded-up to create the more aggressive 750 Sport, with its clip-ons, rearsets and optional half-fairing; and the even racier 750 Super Sport, with its Desmo valve operation and single seat, that was inspired by that famous Imola victory.

Ducati's V-twin range was well under way, and one of the great motorcycling dynasties had been established. More than four decades later those sportier models and bigger 864cc Desmos get the lion's share of the publicity, but the GT750 that began the V-twin line in such brilliant style is far from forgotten.

WHAT'S IT LIKE TO RIDE?

An example as good as this one is fantastic, at least after it has warmed up. The Ducati's cold motor needed several kicks before it reluctantly fired up, though the glorious mix of rustling mechanical sounds, Dell'Orto sucking (later models went back to the prototype's Italian carbs) and Conti bark meant I soon forgave it once it did come to life. Manoeuvring at slow speed highlighted the lack of steering lock, and the gearbox was initially very stiff, as well as providing an unfamiliar one-up, four-down pattern for my right foot.

But after just a few miles the engine was warm, the gearbox was working fine, the sun was gleaming off that shapely tank (whose high-quality paintwork doubtless

surpassed the notoriously poor original finish), and the Ducati was running so well that it was amazing to think that any bike, let alone a first attempt at a V-twin, could have been so good all those years ago.

That 60bhp claimed maximum was doubtless a rather optimistic figure, and this engine couldn't match the midrange grunt of the bigger-bore V-twins that followed it. But the GT still accelerated with plenty of enthusiasm, its straight-line performance emphasised by the fairly upright riding position that was still sporty enough to allow a comfortable crouch into the wind at higher speeds.

In best Ducati V-twin fashion the engine was smooth enough to be pleasant throughout the range, but had enough vibration to give an involving feel. This motor had been fairly recently rebuilt so I wasn't revving it to the start of the red zone at 7500rpm, let alone the proper

BELOW: Exhaust gives a truly glorious sound.



EXHAUST

The pair of slim Conti silencers contribute, along with the 30mm Dell'Orto carbs of this late-model GT, to the bike's glorious sound as well as to its enjoyably lively performance.

SEAT

The shapely and respectably thick and well-padded dual-seat is comfortable enough to help the Ducati's impressive all-round ability but there's not much for a pillion to hold.

FRAME

The twin-downtube tubular steel frame provides plenty of rigidity, and contributes to the Ducati's claimed dry weight figure of 185kg, which is light by 750cc superbike standards.

ENGINE

Fabio Taglioni's first V-twin has 748cc capacity, a 90° cylinder angle with the front pot angled at 15°, uses conventional valve springs, and produces a claimed 60bhp.

HANDLEBAR

The GT's slightly raised, fairly wide one-piece bar gives a reasonably comfortable, slightly leant-forward riding position that helps make the bike a useful all-round roadster.

FRONT BRAKE

The single 280mm disc and Brembo caliper requires a firm squeeze of the lever to generate much stopping power, but Ducati never got round to updating the GT with a second disc.



redline 500rpm later. But that was fine because the valve-spring unit was at its leisurely best when short-shifted, and was happy to keep the bike cruising at a relaxed 70mph with a bit in hand.

Stability was impeccable, and although the blend of conservative chassis geometry and 19in front wheel meant the GT required a fair bit of steering input, it was light enough to respond quickly when I needed to change direction on a narrow and twisty country road. This bike's ever-reliable Pirelli Phantoms also helped by being sticky enough to make good use of the GT's ground clearance, which was generous despite the reasonably low-set and comfortable footrests.

The only chassis part that really felt dated was the single-disc front brake, which was a bit wooden and lacking in power. But that didn't detract from the enjoyment of riding a classic V-twin that looked gorgeous and had the engine and chassis performance to match, as well as an addictively sweet sound and feel.

WHAT THEY COST

The GT750's blend of looks, historical significance, riding pleasure and rarity means that it's far from cheap. Especially if you want one from 1971 or '72, because they're even more scarce than the later versions. "We get between £12,000 and £18,000 on average," says John Fallon, boss of Made In Italy Motorcycles (www.madeinitalymotorcycles.com), who supplied the test bike. "An early one would definitely be towards the top end of that." The price goes up considerably, to around the £30,000 mark, for a restored GT, not least

because this relatively humble valve-spring roadster is very nearly as expensive to rebuild as a more exotic Desmo Super Sport. "You can easily have £15,000 of restoration costs, on top of the donor bike," says John. "A good new crankshaft costs close to £2000 and you need around 100 hours of labour."

For that sort of money though you can be looking at a GT – like the stunning metalflake red example currently on the Made In Italy website – that is better than new, with electronic ignition, twin Lockheed front discs and modern shocks. Lottery winners can go a stage further by searching for one of the original 100 bikes, which had sand-cast engine cases and are worth up to £50,000.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

Despite early Ducatis' reputation for unreliability the GT750 is essentially pretty sound, although any 40-plus-year-old Italian bike has plenty of potential for hideously expensive problems. "There's nothing in particular that goes wrong with them, just the normal things you'd expect on any old bike," says John. Correct engine and frame numbers are as vital as on any valuable classic.

Most running GTs will have been updated to some extent by now, often with components that are better than the originals. "More modern electrical parts are better, especially the ignition and charging systems," says John. "But despite what a lot of people think they're very good. And parts availability is probably better than when it was in production. Some original bits like stainless mudguards and headlamps can be difficult to find, but there's not much you can't get."

FRONT WHEEL

Despite its fairly conservative geometry and 19in front wheel, the Ducati is respectably agile as well as stable, and Pirelli's Phantom grips well enough for cornering fun.

BELOW: The single disc is an upgrade over the prototype's drum.



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BMW 1200GS Adventure, 56 plate, 24,700 miles, white, recent MoT, two new tyres, top box OBC heated grips, ABS, £6750 ono Tel. 07849 650637. Garmarthenshire



BMW G650XC 2009, 10k miles, brand new, Hyper pro shock, fantastic on/off road bike, very economical, just completed trip to Italy, MoT Apr 16, £2950. Tel. 07973 318210. Sunderland



BMW K1200RS 2001, vgc, 12 mths' MoT, low mileage, panniers, Givi top box, frame inc brackets, new battery and front tyre. Tel. Nick 07419 111047. Cornwall



BMW R100R Mystic Combination, 1994, red, Smart Heddingham ETH sidecar, I/Link forks, twin plugged unleaded heads, excellent well set up outfit, £6750 Tel. 07798 866071. Middx



BMW R100RS 1981, fully restored with many new parts and upgrades. See <http://c4mun.bmw.blogspot.co.uk/> Offers around £4900. Tel. Chris 07748 306303. Herts.



BMW R1200ST 2005, excellent condition, 26k, fsh, MoT May 2016, slimmer than an RT, bar risers, friction cruise control, fender extenders, 60 mpg, £3500. Tel. Ian 01162 607758. Leics.



BMW R45 500cc, 1980, Surrey BMW Steib s/c outfit, home built, s/c body, easy side door, 23k miles, MoT, history, bills etc, £1850. Tel. 07591 606806; 07523 971861 6pm-10pm.



BMW R80RT has full fairing and luggage, long MoT, good condition, £1960. Tel. 01923 461289. Herts.



BRIDGESTONE 200 Mk 2SS, 1969, nr concours restoration to orig spec, UK reg, MoT, superb example of high performance rotary valve 2t twins, v rare in UK, £4250 ono. 01474 746930. Kent.



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GREEVES TRIALS 250cc, frame no 24TGS tank, needs work, new shocks, £1900 ono. Tel. 01202 698381. Poole, Dorset



HARLEY DAVIDSON Sportster trike, 1200cc, white, MoT 2016, low miles (discs all round twin front), twin clocks, Stage 2 tuned, s/s exhaust, 2002, £6500. Tel. 07720 899616. Lancs



HARLEY DAVIDSON 883XL custom, reg 2005, one owner from new, mileage 16k, MoT till July 2016, many extras, excellent condition, £3495 ono. Tel. 07711 567610. S Yorks.



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HONDA CBRF-6 600cc, 2006, 22k miles, exc cond, full s/h, silver/black, Scorpion exhaust, new D.I.D. chains and sprockets fitted, 21k, MoT Oct 15, £3300 ono. 07814 308585. Cheshire.



HONDA CBX550 F2 550cc, 1982, 38k miles, old MoTs, new front tyre, battery, good all round, £1395 ono. Tel. 079860 59155. Lincs



HONDA CD200 Benly, excellent condition, fully serviced, 12 months MoT, 1950, £1950. Tel. 01923 461289. Herts.



HONDA CJ250T rare yellow, 1979, 18k, orig, requires battery and attention to free up f/brake, clutch and accelerator cables etc, compression good, £575. Tel. 07940 889107. London.



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HONDA CRF 450cc, 2009, motor cross bike for sale, needs new fork seals, only two owners, has been raced & is in very good condition, £1900 Tel. 07746 879171. Oxfordshire



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HONDA GL1200 1986, project bike, needs alternator to complete, two grand spent on it, mint, excellent engine and condition. Offers. Tel. 07434 513161. Lancs



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KAWASAKI A1 Samurai Series 2, 1969, US import with Nova certificate & American title, ride or restore, not many of these rotary valve 2T twins in UK, £2750 ono. Tel. 01474 746930. Kent



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KAWASAKI ER6N 2012/61, sage green, MoT, serviced, 4,600 miles, h/grips, colour coded top box inc, never ridden in wet, garaged, £2900. Tel. 07539 833755. Gtr London.



KAWASAKI GTR1000 1994, burgundy, 32,541 miles, as new Michelin tyres f&r recent rear disc + monoshock Bushes, Goodridge hoses to front, £1350. Tel. 07434 129349. Derbys.



KAWASAKI KZ1000 California Chips Police Bike, 1986, last MoT 2007, UK reg 1996, new battery, engine starts and runs well, year 1986, £3000. Tel. 07776 422615. Kent.



MOTO GUZZI 1200 Sport 61, vgc, fsh, MoT April 2016, centre stand, engine bars, colour coded luggage, £4995 ovno. Tel. 07523 882828.



MOTO GUZZI NEVADA 2006, 32k only, new exhaust system and mirrors, top box and panniers, (back rest), MoT, extras, tourer, £2385. Tel. 01934 812305. N Somerset.



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SUZUKI DRZ400S 2000, less than the indicated 17k miles, Sorned, garaged, polished s/arm, new brake fluid and battery fitted for selling, £1750. Tel. 07500 912419. Worcs.



SUZUKI GSXR600 (K3), 2003 (53), 20,000 miles, MoT June 2016, new tyres, battery, fluids & filters, recent Renthal chain & sprockets, £2595 ono. Tel. 01945 780081.



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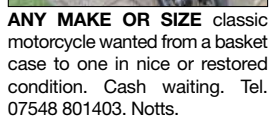
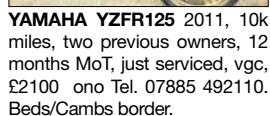
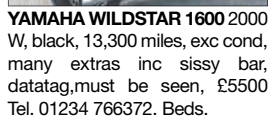
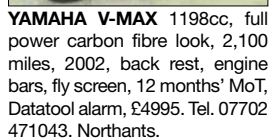
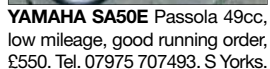
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01485 541043. Norfolk.

HONDA SH300 scooter, 300cc, MoT Mar 16, silver, 24k, auto, £995 ovno. Tel. 07772 797112. Derbys.

HONDA SILVERWING 2001, FJS 600 maxi scooter, silver, 10,750 miles, serviced, MoT, exc orig cond, workshop manual, Honda top box, cover, security chain, £1650. Tel. 01995 606842. Lancs.

HONDA SILVERWING 2001, FJS 600 Maxi scooter, silver, 10,750 miles, serviced, MoT, exc orig cond, recent new drive belt, £1475. Tel. 01995 606842. Lancs.

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Wake up call

Steve Rose



I'd like to argue with the man in blue who just invited me to sit in his BMW. "The biggest danger," he says, "is that you'll meet someone coming the other way who rides just like you do." I would contest that whatever he's just seen me doing felt perfectly orderly, well timed and very much in control from where I was sitting.

I like riding in traffic – always have – and I like to think that I'm pretty good at it. Mr P isn't going to nick me, he's already told me this and, after a discussion about my riding he shows me the video. Taken from a rear-facing camera as I weave through the traffic and overtake the unmarked car, he asks me to "watch out for the motorcycle".

And to be honest, I'm shocked how close I get to the police car before I see myself... and I knew I was coming. It makes a harsh reality of a press release we got for the Institute of Advanced Motorists (IAM) last month about how the major cause of road accidents is "failure to look properly combined with failure to judge another vehicle's path or speed".

Next up was failure to look properly combined with carelessness/recklessness. What I hadn't realised was that police can record up to six contributory factors to an accident from a list of 77, but it's the most important two in each incident that are usually the most telling.

Looking at the most recent figures, the things that crop up most are all to do with lack of attention, failing to spot the other vehicle or pedestrian and failing to judge either their own or the other person's speed.

Another release from the IAM two weeks later went even further to explaining this. Regarding smartphone use while driving, 15% of 25-32 years olds admitted to watching a video on their phone while driving. Not only that, 19% of 25-35 years olds admitted to taking a 'selfie' while driving and 34% of drivers in the same age bracket admitted accessing the internet while driving. Is there any chance this might have an influence on the figures above where failing to look properly becomes the major cause of accidents?

It's interesting that in that first list, excessive speed came 17th in the table of commoner causes of accidents. Is that because speed was never an issue or is it that, despite our protests, we have actually all slowed down? I suspect it might be the latter, especially those of us on two wheels.

So what can we do to make car drivers more aware? The video of my riding I watched last week was certainly an eye-opener because, despite being on a bright red

Steve prides himself on his riding skills, but is that pride well placed?

VFR with headlights blazing, even I didn't see me till very late. As a group most of us are still reluctant to go hi-viz and the more I think about that the sillier it seems. If the pilot taking us on holiday announced that he was switching off the transmitter that told air traffic control where he was because his mates took the piss about his Sam Browne ariel, we'd be running for the emergency exits, so how come we don't want to make it easy for ourselves to be seen?

And don't say style because you only have to look back to what we were wearing in the 90s to blow that argument out of the water... and you at the back, remove those stick-on rabbit ears... now.

I guess it's up to us. If I want to carry on riding like I do, then I need to go more-viz, if not hi-viz. which is fine, but what can we do about the twonks in cars on their dim-phones?

Funnily enough thumbing through a copy of *Back Street Heroes* magazine last night shortly after watching a documentary on bombing raids in the Second World War I think I may have come up with the answer.

During the latter stages of the war British planes used to drop something called chaff, which was small strips of aluminium foil that distorted enemy radar so they couldn't pinpoint the bombers and shoot them down. My suggestion would be for motorcycle clothing manufacturers to stitch long aluminium tassels onto their jackets and troos, which would have the same effect on mobile phone signals as chaff did to radar as we approach a car.

Hopefully, the screen suddenly going fuzzy might prompt even the most inattentive driver to look up just as we go by. In time car-bods would learn to associate a fuzzy screen with an incoming motorcycle, a bit like Pavlov's dog.

It's a win-win. We get the tassel revival and all get to look as cool as we all secretly hoped; accidents will drop enormously and the word chaff will return to common usage.

No need to thank me, all part of the service.

Who is Rose?

Steve Rose is a high mileage road rider. A former editor of *Bike* and *RiDE* magazine and one time back street bike dealer. He's also one of the UK's most experienced and trusted road testers

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Monthly payment	£79.00
Total deposit	£1,723.37
On the road cash price*	£8,850.00
Optional final payment^	£4,361.63
0.0% APR	

BMW S 1000 R.

Monthly payment	£99.00
Total deposit	£2,127.80
On the road cash price*	£10,350.00
Optional final payment^	£5,344.14
2.9% APR	

For more information, contact your local BMW Motorrad Retailer or visit www.bmw-motorrad.co.uk

BMW Motorrad UK is a credit broker and not a lender.

Representative example is for a BMW R 1200 GS TE, with a contract mileage of 15,000 and excess mileage charge of 9.57p per mile. All finance applies to new motorcycles ordered between 1 September and 31 December 2015 and registered by 31 December 2015 (subject to availability) at participating BMW Retailers. Retail customers only. *On the road cash price is based on manufacturer's recommended retail price and includes 2 year BMW Retailer Warranty, BMW Emergency Service, 12 months' road fund licence, motorcycle first registration fee, delivery, number plates and VAT. ^Optional final payment and option to purchase fee not payable if you opt to return the motorcycle at the end of the agreement (motorcycle condition, excess mileage and other charges may be payable). Finance available subject to credit acceptance to UK residents aged 18 or over. Guarantees and indemnities may be required. Terms and conditions apply. Offer may be varied, withdrawn or extended at any time. 'BMW Select' is a form of hire-purchase agreement provided by BMW Motorrad Financial Services, a trading name of BMW Financial Services (GB) Limited, Bartley Way, Hook, Hampshire RG27 9UF. You will have a 14 day statutory right to withdraw from the agreement. BMW Motorrad UK commonly introduce customers to BMW Motorrad Financial Services. This introduction does not amount to independent financial advice.